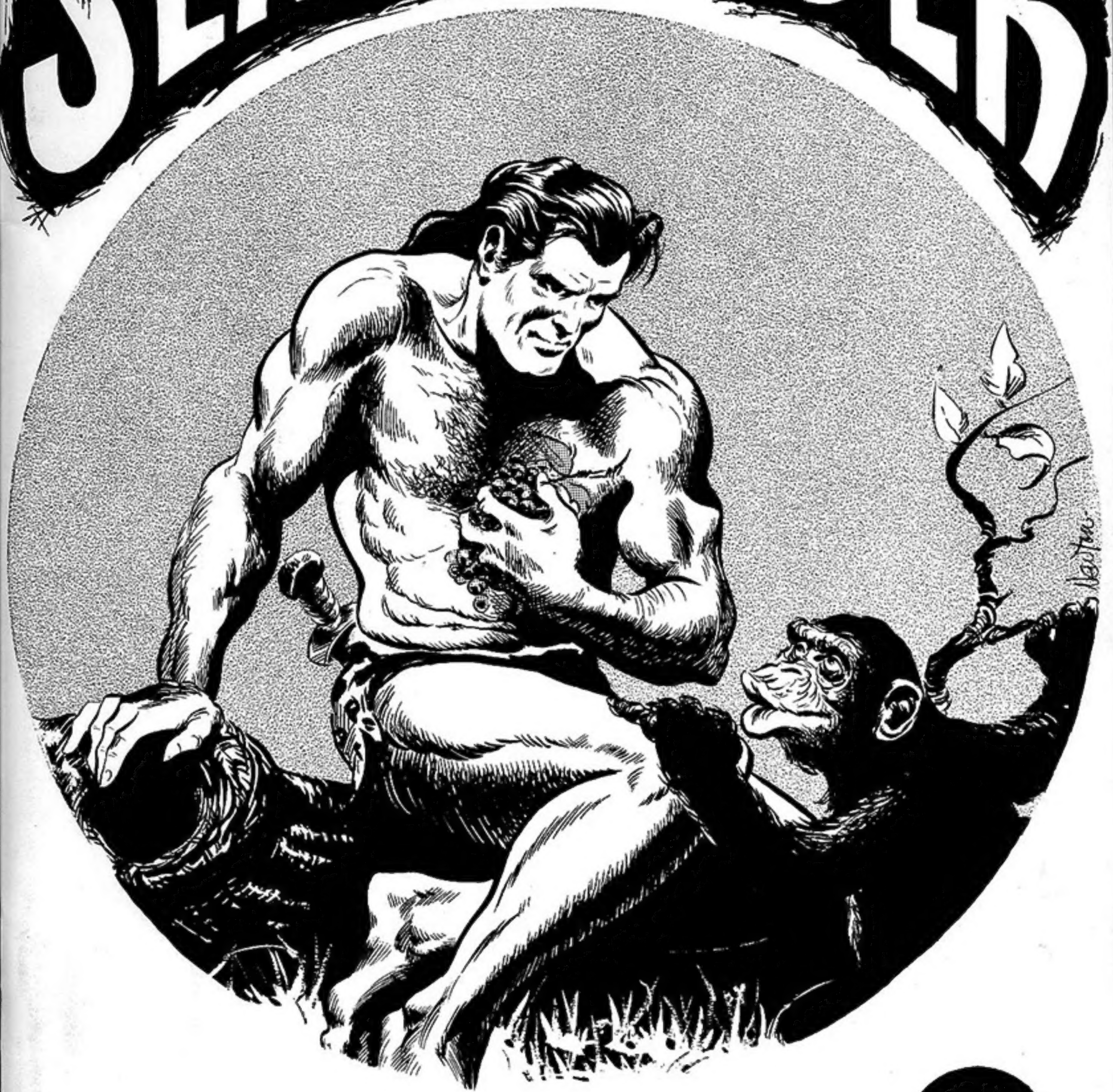
SENSE of WONDER



YARMAK

12

SENSE OF WONDER

Editor and Publisher: BILL SCHELLY

75¢

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ART: Don Newton, Roy G. Krenkel, Herb Arnold, Joseph Wehrle, Jr., Al McWilliams, C. C. Beck, William Black, Bill Schelly, Jim Schumeister , Kenn Kelley, Rich Buckler.
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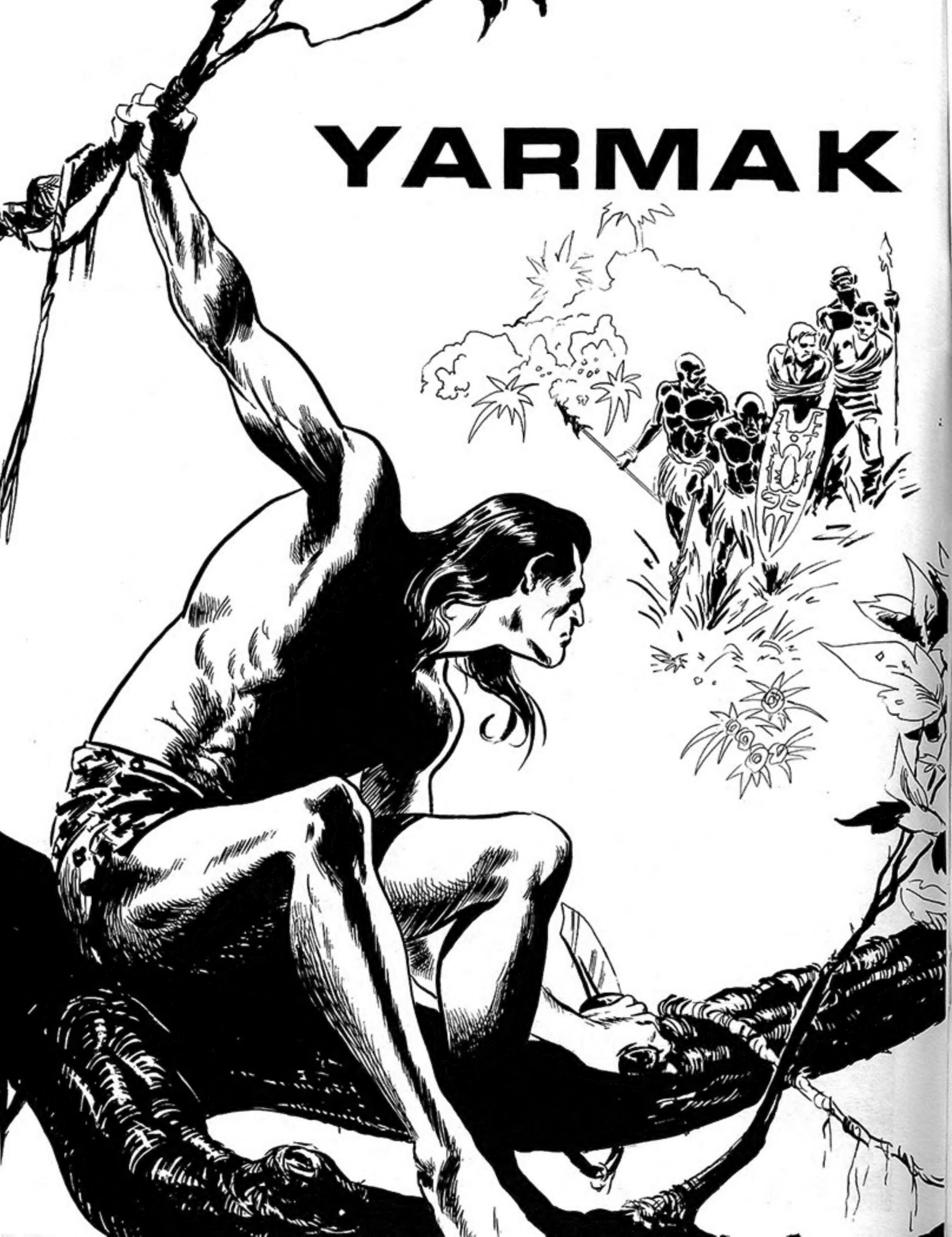
REALITY IS SLAVERY!

YARMAK



THE FEARLESS ONE

BY JOHN T. RYAN

It is quite common, in the world of literature, to see a popular character or formula imitated . . . over and over again. "Follow the trend!" -- is the cry -- "Get on the bandwagon!" And no one gets onto the bandwagon quicker than publishers. As it is with Ian Fleming's James Bond, so it was with Edgar Rice Burroughs' Tarzan. Slap a loin cloth on your hero . . . plant him in the jungles of some foreign continent . . . let him rescue some lovely damsel in distress . . . and the readers would think it was another Tarzan. Or, at least, that's the way the publishers figured it. Tarzan was the type of character that inspired imitations . . . and there were imitations galore! Burroughs, no doubt, accepted this as being part of the writing game. But no matter how philosophically he may have accepted these literary imitations, he must have been astounded at the huge tribe of Jungle Kings and Queens who swung their way through a multitude of comic book pages!

Over the years, the U.S. comics industry spawned a host of such imitations . . . Sheena, Kaanga, Wambi, Ka-zar, Fantomah, Wild Boy, Jo-Jo, Rulah, Camilla and Jann of the Jungle are just a few of the names that spring readily to mind. Some, like Sheena and Kaanga, are remembered with a great deal of affection. Some are confined to that area of the mind where we hide those experiences best forgotten. But good . . . bad . . . or indifferent, they were all lineal descendants of ERB's immortal character.

> "Neither the storyline nor artwork were consistent enough to make the comic an all-time great . . ."

Many countries outside the U.S. climbed the "King of the Jungle" bandwagon . . . and Australia was no exception. Our foremost contribution came in the form of YARMAK -- Jungle King, published by Young's Merchandising Company. There were a few other local imitations, of course, but Yarmak stood head and shoulders above them all . . . as well he might, for he was 7 feet tall if he was an inch!

Since Yarmak's career was spread over the late 40's and early 50's it is, perhaps, a little too early for me to become nostalgic about it. Had Yarmak invaded the comic scene some 3 or 4 years earlier (when I was at my most impressionable age, comicwise), I have no doubt that I would be speaking about him in terms that would border on hushed reverance! For, in retrospect, Yarmak was clearly superior to the majority of comics from my impressionable period . . . both in storyline and art. Neither the storyline nor artwork were consistent enough to make the comic an all-time great . . . but both were miles ahead of most of their Australian contemporaries.

While there were over 50 issues of YARMAK COMICS there were, in fact, only 32 originals. Of this number, 29 carried the Yarmak title and 3 were called JUNGLE KING. After the appearance of JUNGLE KING #3 in June, 1952, Young's Merchandising commenced reprinting these stories . . . picking up their numbering sequence from the last issue of YARMAK COMICS. For reasons best known to themselves, the first reprint (#30) did not contain the origin story. Instead, it featured "Yarmak's Desert Saga", from issue #6 . . . and the cover that was originally on issue #14 ! ! The rest of their reprints followed the same chaotic pattern and I, for one, would baulk at the task of cross-indexing them. However, listed along with this article is a publishing history on all the "original" Yarmak stories.

The men responsible for YARMAK were Stanley and Reginald Pitt. Certainly the others of the Pitt production team, Wheelahan and the Ashley brothers, made their contributions . . . but it was the Pitts who carried the responsibility of the pencilling, stories and layouts.

Stan Pitt was the first boy genius of the Australian comic industry. While still in his teens, he produced the finest comic art, in the classic tradition, that Australia had seen. His SILVER STARR has become a byword among Australian collectors . . . and is eagerly sought by many fans overseas. The strip displayed Pitt's great qualities in the way of fine line, proportion, composition and imaginative draughtsmanship. Even at this early age, he had reached a stage of achievement that most comic artists never reach in a lifetime. Had Pitt chosen to continue with Silver Starr, I have no doubt that it would still be running in our newspapers, as well as many overseas.

And with that kind of build-up, you'd assume that the Yarmak art was nothing short of superb? Such was not the case! The major reason was that, with the exception of part of issue #1, the only time Pitt inked his own pencils was in #24 and #25. I know, for certain, that this is something that Pitt regrets, to this day. As you can see from the publishing history, the majority of the inking was done by Frank Ashley, who was a friend of the Pitt family. It was a case of sentiment winning out over common sense. Ashley was not equipped to handle Pitt's fine line . . . and, in some issues, came up with some extraordinary interpretations. Possibly because some issues were inked under less pressure than others, Ashley turned in a few creditable efforts . . . but, for the most part, he continually "lost" Pitt's fine line. In many issues, it is obvious that some wonderful pencils were "covered - up".

In those days, I wasn't aware that there were such beings as "Inkers" or that a strip was done by anyone other than the artist whose name appeared on the comic. So, you can understand the problem I had in trying to reconcile the issues inked by Ashley as being by the same artist who had produced the beautiful Silver Starr.

On the other hand, those pages or issues handled by Paul Wheelahan seemed nearer to Pitt's approach. This is understandable, as Wheelahan was of the opinion (and still is, for that matter) that Stanley Pitt was the greatest fineline artist in the comic book medium! He was following in the steps of his master . . . treading on hallowed ground . . . and it was only natural that his inking should capture a good deal of the Pitt attitude. However, while he was able to retain the flavor of Pitt's fine line, it was a long way short of the standards Pitt had set.

Jimmy (Jay) Ashley didn't become involved with Yarmak until the 26th issue . . . and remained with the comic until its ultimate demise, six issues later. While his inking was better than his brother's, it still didn't compliment Pitt's pencils.

Because Stan Pitt and Charles Yeung didn't see eye-to-eye on what constituted a good cover, Pitt didn't do all the covers for Yarmak. The illustration on Page 6 is an

excellent example As you can see, this was meant to be the cover for the first issue, but it was rejected by Young as being "too cluttered"!! Personally, I consider it to be the best of all the YARMAK covers. Pitt handled the covers for issues #1 thru 5, 9 thru 11, 13, 14, 16 thru 18, 21, 22, 24 and 25 . . . and many of these were "doctored" to eliminate some of what were considered "superfluous details". Inside the cover of #12 (The Pigmies of Atrix) is a full-page illustration which looks as though it was meant to be a cover. Could it be another cover that was rejected by Young??

It wasn't unusual for Pitt to introduce faces of well-known film personalities into his strip, Errol Flynn's face could be found in a number of issues. Johnny Weissmuller . . . Douglas Fairbanks . . . Richard Widmark . . . Zachary Scott . . . Sidney Greenstreet . . . and many a Hollywood beauty found themselves making unexpected "guest appearances" in the pages of YARMAK!

Frank Ashley handled a number of the storylines . . . but the bulk of this work fell on the shoulders of Reg Pitt, who was also responsible for the majority of the layouts. As mentioned earlier, the quality of the stories varied . . . though very few would be classed as real shockers. Both men had a wonderful feel for the language . . . with Reg Pitt being more inclined to the poetic and off-beat style. One of the major differences in the two men's approach seemed to be that to Ashley the story, and not the character, was the most important concern. Quite often, this delayed Yarmak's entrance . . . as instanced in #22 (Yarmak Meets the Ant-Man), he doesn't make his appearance until page 10, which is no way to treat a comic hero. On the other hand, Reg Pitt, while always placing great emphasis on the story, never forgot that it was The Fearless One, himself, who was the main attraction . . . and he saw to it that Yarmak was soon on the scene.

I don't know who was responsible for the story in YARMAK #1 -- perhaps it was a joint effort, as both men's names are listed in in the credits. If so, both men are at fault for the scanty coverage relating to Yarmak's origin.

This story tells of Captain Tolus Landers, a world famous explorer, who is attacked by a ferocious tiger, while hunting in Africa. Just when it appears that Landers has had it, a mighty figure hurtles from the treetops. With the help of his "flashing blade", he dispatches the beast and stands before the aged hunter, who offers a gold pendant as a token of thanks. The magnificent specimen of manhood refuses the gift, saying "I want not thy amulet friend. Be not afraid! Many questions are reflected in thine eyes -- mayhap an introduction will afford thee some peace of mind! I have lived here for two decades -- my real name is no longer of consequence for all dwellers of the jungle regard me as Yarmak, the Fearless One."

And that is precisely all you ever learn about Yarmak's origin. In #6 (April 1950) he speaks of having "lived with danger since a small boy". . . and since he has lived in the jungle for two decades, it is safe to assume that he is in his middle-to-late twenties. But how did he get to be in the jungle? Was he abandoned? Were his parents killed by hostile natives . . . or devoured by savage animals? Where did he learn that archaic form of English? Maybe his parents were Quaker missionaries? Who can tell? Perhaps the writers felt that Tarzan's origin was so firmly entrenched in the readers' minds, precious space should not be wasted on such details.

Whatever the reasoning behind Yarmak's peculiar speech, all the "thees", "thous" and "thines" were dropped after the first issue . . . and a more poetic line adopted.

> On binoculars: "Ah! And the black tusks with the little pools of hard water inside ... "
>
> To a lion: "Ah! Fierce dolt! You could have stalked deer on this day, and seen the morrow ... but instead, you foolishly attack Yarmak -- and expire ere this day has passed!"
>
> To the dead: "Pitiful fools you were to covet the previous tusks. White-ones ... You could be alive yet, and happy, too, had you not allowed the lust for wealth to twist your minds so!"

Certainly not the run-of-the-mill dialogue to be found in most jungle-style comics, is it? And, perhaps, this is one of the reasons behind Yarmak's success . . . while some of the stories may have been a bit "way out", the dialogue was imaginative.

As far as I'm concerned, the last really

BY STAN PITT AND REG PITT
Yarmak
Jungle king
Sequence
FOR THIRTY CENTURIES TRAVELERS INTO EGYPT HAVE GAZED IN WONDER UPON THE MAGNIFICENT MONUMENTS ERECTED THERE... THE TOMBS OF TUTANKHAMEN, HATSHEPSUT, AMENEMHET, THE PYRAMIDS OF KHUFU AND KHAFRE, KARNAK'S TEMPLE, THE OBELISKS, THE GREAT SPHINX...
AMONG THE TOMBS THAT EXCAVATIONS HAVE UNCOVERED IS THAT OF THE EGYPTIAN EXPLORER HARKHUF.. DID ANY OF THE ARCHAEOLOGISTS WHO FOUND THIS TOMB SUSPECT THAT THE MUMMY IT CONTAINED WAS NOT HARKHUF'S? ~ WOULD THEY HAVE HAD ANY REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THIS WAS NOT HARKHUF'S FINAL RESTING PLACE? ~ WOULD THEY BELIEVE THAT HIS EMBALMED BODY HAS LAIN FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS IN A GREAT PYRAMID ERECTED SECRETLY IN THE DEPTHS OF THE BELGIAN CONGO? ~ ROY AND RICHARD SHARRON WOULD BELIEVE THESE THINGS, FOR THEY, WITH YARMAK, HAVE FOUND HARKHUF'S PYRAMID!
STANLEY PITT

To the right is the Stanley Pitt splash page to YARMAK #24, Oct. 1951.

genuine Yarmak was JUNGLE KING #2 . . . as JUNGLE KING #3 was virtually a "fake". Stan Pitt had "washed his hands" of Yarmak and the issue in question was produced by Reg Pitt and Jimmy Ashley as something of a private venture . . . like, they needed the money! Reg pencilled it to the best of his ability . . . and even resorted to tracing some of Stan's old artwork. When Reg found he was getting nowhere, he was able to talk Stan into doing a few pages to help them out. How they were ever able to convince Charles Young that the early pages were the work of Stanley Pitt is beyond my comprehension! However, there is not sufficient Stanley Pitt artwork in JUNGLE KING #3 to make it a genuine Yarmak . . . leastways, not for my money.

Where Tarzan did the "right thing" by Jane and married her, there is no record of Yarmak being so gentlemanly towards his mate, Zira! The lovely Zira Mandell, a titian haired aviatrix, made her debut on page 10 of #6 (Yarmak's Desert Saga). The Jungle King had been tricked by Murdo (an Imbani tribesman with visions of becoming "King of the Jungle") into entering the desert to search for the non-existant Lasta Plant, which was supposed to hold the only cure for the ailing Imbani Chieftain. With Wa-Wa (a small monkey) as his companion, Yarmak wanders the desert for many days before collapsing in the blistering heat. Vultures waiting to feast on his almost lifeless body are dispersed by the roar of a monoplane engine. Yarmak drags himself to his feet and staggers towards the "whiteman's Iron-Bird", as a lithe, feminine figure emerges from the small plane. He collapses short of the plane but is revived by Zira . . . and learns that she was flying to the Belgian Congo to find him! (Just why, is never explained!) Zira flies him back to his domain so he may settle the score with Murdo . . . which he does, with a vengeance. The battle behind him, Yarmak sends Zira away, saying, "Tis best you return to your own country, Zira. The jungle can only be a home to those who understand, and love it, as I do!" She flies off . . . but in a short time she turns back . . . and is met by Yarmak who welcomes her. Issue #7, (The Ape Slave Trade), opens with Zira sharing Yarmak's tree home . . . and not a wedding ring in sight! It would never do for the CCA, which is, perhaps, another reason why I liked Yarmak!

To my mind, The Fearless One reached his peak with issues 24, 25 and 26, in 1951. This was not only because Stanley Pitt inked the first two stories, but because of the stor ies themselves. Reg Pitt produced a trilogy dealing with a Pyramid erected by Harkuf of Elephantine . . .

> "A great Tomb, hidden for centuries in the tangled jungles of the Belgian Congo . . .
>
> A boy, daring and ambitious, obsessed with the desire to uncover the glory of bygone . . . ages . . .
>
> Zulus -- a primitive people born of the jungle -- instinctively savage -- oppressive -- feared and hated by their Bantu kin . . .
>
> A forbidding setting and strange companions for the jungle king -- as he attempts to solve the mysteries of HARKUF'S PYRAMID!"

Thus opened the most imaginative and interesting of all the Yarmak stories. The splash pages of #24 and 25 are a delight to behold . . . quickly setting the mood for the tale that follows. Portion of the opening story is told in an Egyptian "comic book" sequence . . . and is most effective. The lettering and the logos, on the splash pages of these issues, were all different . . . designed to fit the particular story. Throughout the trilogy, even the word balloons were stylized to give an Egyptian flavor. Certainly the series would have been "complete" had Pitt inked #26 -- but I guess you can't have everything.

Like all Jungle Kings, Yarmak had the respect of the bird and animal population of the jungle. He spoke to them . . . and they answered. His cry of "YAR-MAR-KEE!" would echo through the jungle . . . and they would come to his aid. In the accepted pattern, many of these were known to Yarmak by name. There were the monkeys -- Wa-Wa, Ke-tka, Waloa . . . the baboons -- Litchica, Chet-Chet, Ornpo . . . the apes -- Dakoma, Buola, Wula . . . the lions -- Fero, Jesto . . . the elephants -- Buala, Tondo. There was Bolko the gorilla, Sid the leopard, Gullo the crane, Algor the crocodile, Zedo the zebra, Rorga the hippopotamus, Giro the giraffe and Muvidi the hyena. Of them all, Yarmak chose Wa - Wa as his companion . . . and they were rare stories when the little monkey didn't make an appearance.

Although blessed with a great deal of wisdom and a fair proportion of animal cunning, Yarmak was an unsophisticated character. While civilization's intrusion into his domain may have startled him . . . it never converted him. Guns were always "bang-sticks" -- and he shunned their use . . . a tornado was a "vicious snake in the sky" . . . gold was "glowing rock" . . . a record-player terrified and baffled him; in turn . . . he had to be instructed in the use of a wrist-watch. Once, he almost throttled a man who was sucking poison from a friend's wound. ("AGHH! I have seen the crazy Blind Bird (a bat) perform such an action -- but never before have I seen a human -- A WHITEMAN, do this horrible thing. This mad man must DIE!")

Yarmak was blessed with a beautiful physique and the strength to match . . . and it was responsible for getting him out of more than one ticklish situation. Apart from the normal encounters one would expect with lions, leopards, crocodiles, etc., Yarmak faced many strange creatures. At varying intervals he was confronted with . . . flesh-eating Dragons . . . Unicorn Men . . . Gigantic Bats . . . Giant Crabs . . . Volcano Lizards . . . Fire Dragons . . . Giant Ants . . . Prehistoric animals . . . and a number of supernatural characters. Having conquered the likes of these is it any wonder that mere mortals were no match for his strength?

But this wise, unsophisticated, jungle strongman belongs to the past. He and Zira are biding their time, somewhere in Limboland . . . along with Sheena, Kaanga and the others. The Pitts are working on new comic projects . . . Paul Wheelahan has forsaken art to become a Western writer . . . and the Ashleys have been swallowed by the great Unknown. I doubt if either Yarmak or the artists would like to revert to the old relationship . . . which is, perhaps, as it should be. Returning to the scene of former triumphs is a precarious situation at the best of times . . . and I would rather remember Yarmak in his days of glory, than face the prospect of a humiliating comeback. The Fearless One was created for a passage of time that is past . . . may he rest there, undisturbed.

The above article originally appeared in Allan Tompkins' Australian fanzine, E. R. B. DIGEST, in 1967. Allan asked me to make sure everyone knows that E.D. is totally defunct, and no copies of any issues have been available for some time.

Additional Notes

YARMAK #1 contained a 10 page Silver Starr story.

Reprints of Big Brother appeared in #8 thru 11, and an 8 page Chop Chop story was reprinted in #2.

One-page fillers consisted of reprints of Big Top, Dan Tootin, Jonesy and Smart Alick.

With issue #12, another Tarzan imitator was introduced to the comic. This was called Konga -- Lord of the Jungle and was drawn by Ray Cav -- which could be an abbreviation for "Cavanagh". Most of the poses are direct copies of Burne Hogarth's Tarzan panels. It ran until #17, each story covering 7 pages.

Issue #18 saw the introduction of another imitator, Chandor, which was the work of well-known comic illustrator Larry Horak. From this introduction, Chandor appeared in all issues except #22 thru 24. All stories were 6 pages, excepting #25 which was 7 pages.

The splash pages of the Yarmak comics carried the sub-title "Jungle King", with the following exceptions: #1, 26, 27, 28 and JUNGLE KING #1 and 2 carried no sub-titles; "King of the Belgian Congo" was the sub-title used in #13 - 19, 24, 29 and JUNGLE KING #3; "Congo King" was the sub-title in #23 only.

"GULLY FOYLE is my name
And Terra is my nation.
Deep Space is my dwelling place,
The Stars my destination."

STAN PITT and Gully Foyle

.... additional information on Stanley Pitt and his attempt to syndicate GULLY FOYLE as a Sunday strip, by John T. Ryan

One of the new comic projects mentioned in the Yarmak article was the, now, legendary GULLY FOYLE. According to Reg Pitt, the idea of the Gully Foyle Sunday Page was triggered by my mention of Stan's work in my fanzine called DOWN UNDER (#1, Nov. 1964). Encouraged by my presentation, Reg decided that Alfred Bester's novel, The Stars My Destination, would make an excellent showcase for his brother's talents. After contacting Bester and getting his permission to proceed with the strip, the Pitts busied themselves on completing a 14 week sequence. Mounted bromides were elaborately packaged and sent to the U.S.

However, problems that were to plague the project made their presence felt at the very beginning. Difficulties were encountered with the mail and correspondence and, seeing the project bogging down, I offered to act as "business manager" until such times as the project got off the ground. In April, 1967, I talked the Pitts into a different method of presentation . . . and one that would, virtually, pay for itself. With the help of Al Kuhfeld, of Minneapolis, we had 15 pages (14 pages of comic plus 1 cover) printed-up 17" x 11" and stapled into booklets. A quantity of these booklets were set aside for distribution to the various syndicates, additional copies were retained for the Pitts/Kuhfeld/Ryan and the balance were sold to U.S. fans at prices ranging between $3 - $5 per copy. (Kuhfeld donated a copy to the 1967 TOFF (trans-oceanic fan fund) Auction and we were all staggered when it brought $18!) I forwarded a batch of covering letters to a contact we had at The New American Library, Rosalind Wolfe, who forwarded the booklets to the syndicates nominated. This move, which saved a lot of money, confused a number of the syndicates. They could not reconcile a package bearing U.S. stamps and postmark . . . but containing a letter from Australia.

From the beginning, it was obvious that the tabloid-style format would not be acceptable to the syndicates. Initially, I had trouble convincing Reg on this score . . . but as the results flowed in, he realized that the format would have to be altered. It is interesting to note that, when first drawn, the early pages of GULLY FOYLE were virtually in the accepted full/half/tab flexible format. However, Reg felt that this formula was too restrictive of Stan's talents and switched to the tabloid-cum-comic book page format.

What did the syndicates think of GULLY FOYLE?

United Feature Syndicate: "The strip, of course, is beautifully drawn, but the continuity is rather confusing, with flashbacks, dreams, alter-ego, etc. We feel that this would be better suited to the comic books where the reader gets more material for study and appreciation."

Ed Grade of the Los Angeles Times: "GULLY FOYLE is very impressive. The art, especially, is superior. However, because of its unusual format, I believe it is unsuited for syndication in this country without a major overhaul, which would entail almost complete redrawing."

Robert Molyneaux of NEA wrote of the problems of selling a Sunday-only continuity but was, obviously, attracted to GULLY FOYLE. He wrote, "However, in the samples you sent the artwork is downright arresting and the story is interesting, and I'd like to pursue this matter one step further. It gather that no daily strip is contemplated. Is this correct?"

Sylvan Byck, King Features Syndicate, saw the strip as being in the same general field as "Flash Gordon" and "Brick Bradford" -- consequently, there was no room in their stable for a third feature of that nature.

I will leave you to draw your own conclusions as to our reactions to the various comments -- except to say that, despite Byck's stature in the field, the comparison between GULLY FOYLE and Flash Gordon/Brick Bradford of 1967 was a bit hard to swallow. That was taking generalization too far!

I was about to follow-up with NEA when we heard from John Higgins of the Ledger Syndicate. While pointing out that there were many problems involved, Higgins recognized the potential of the strip. Dozens of letters flowed back and forth across the Pacific Ocean . . . sometimes quickly, sometimes after agonizing delays.

Passing over the many obstacles and problems encountered in the months that followed, by November 1968 the Pitts were well on the way to completing the "buffer-stock" of 26 pages required by Ledger. During this period, I had been working out percentages, etc. with Robert Mills, Alfred Bester's agent. When the Ledger Syndicate cabled for copies of our contracts, late in November 1968, I wrote to Bob Mills about the urgency of the situation. His reply sounded the deathknell to GULLY FOYLE. Apparently, Bester had disposed of the movie rights to The Stars My Destination to Ashley Famous Agency -- and the motion picture contract called for the control of any comic strip use!

Our solicitor both wrote to and cabled Ashley Famous Agency -- but silence reigned supreme! And that was it -- that was the note on which the GULLY FOYLE strip died!

Continued on Page 12

Yarmak Publishing History

All issues were published by Young's Merchandising Co., and distributed by Gordon and Gotch (A/asia) Ltd.

ISSUE	PUB. DATE	STORY TITLES	INKED BY
1	Nov. 1949	Yarmak and the Ape-Men	Stan Pitt and Frank Ashley
2	Dec. 1949	The Tombs of Icacius	Paul Wheelahan
3	Jan. 1950	The Isle of the Living Dead	Paul Wheelahan
4	Feb. 1950	In Quest of the White Gorilla	Paul Wheelahan
5	Mar. 1950	Queen of the Panthers	Frank Ashley and
		Domain of Eternal Sorrow	Paul Wheelahan
6	Apr. 1950	Yarmak's Desert Saga	Frank Ashley and Paul Wheelahan
		The Gorilla Menace	Paul Wheelahan
7	May 1950	The Ape Slave Trade	Frank Ashley
8	June 1950	Yarmak's Strangest Adventure	Frank Ashley
9	July 1950	The Leopard King	Frank Ashley
10	Aug. 1950	Sangeala Island	Frank Ashley
11	Sep. 1950	The Heathen Idol	Frank Ashley
12	Oct. 1950	The Pigmies of Atrix	Frank Ashley
13	Nov. 1950	The Lost Castle of Lahor	Frank Ashley
14	Dec. 1950	The River Dwellers	Frank Ashley
15	Jan. 1951	The Forbidden Land	Frank Ashley
16	Feb. 1951	Peril in Bel Hado	Frank Ashley
17	Mar. 1951	The Hidden Valley	Frank Ashley
18	Apr. 1951	The Wizard of the Caverns	Frank Ashley
19	May 1951	Yarmak and the Yellowmen	Frank Ashley
20	June 1951	Yarmak -- Jungle Disc-Jockey	Frank Ashley
21	July 1951	The Sky Phantom	Frank Ashley
22	Aug. 1951	The Goddess of Osofrod	Frank Ashley
23	Sep. 1951	Yarmak meets the Ant-Man	Frank Ashley
24	Oct. 1951	Harkuf's Pyramid	Stan Pitt
25	Nov. 1951	The Hermit and the Sphinx	Stan Pitt
26	Dec. 1951	NO TITLE	Jimmy (Jay) Ashley
27	Jan. 1952	Meet Yarmak's Double	Jimmy (Jay) Ashley
28	Feb. 1952	The Valley of the Moon	Jimmy (Jay) Ashley
29	Mar. 1952	The Hooded Horde	Jimmy (Jay) Ashley
JUNGLE KING COMICS			
1	Apr. 1952	The Pit of Doom	Jimmy (Jay) Ashley
2	May 1952	The Phantom Ship	Jimmy (Jay) Ashley
3	June 1952	NO TITLE (Pencilled by Stan and Reg Pitt)	Jimmy (Jay) Ashley

Gully Foyle 14

By ALFRED BESTER & STANLEY PITT ASSOCIATES

★UNAWARE THAT HIS CAPTORS HAVE TATTOOED HIM WHILE UNDER ANAESTHETIC, GULLY FOYLE AWAKENS IN A SMALL ROCKET LAUNCH THAT IS WELDED TO THE SURFACE OF SARGASSO PLANETOID. ALONE EXCEPT FOR A NURSE, HE INSPECTS THE SHIP, FINDS IT FLIGHTWORTHY AND PLANS ESCAPE...

HE PICKED UP THE NURSE AND CARRIED HER TO THE LAUNCH'S OPEN HATCH...

WHAT ARE YOU DOING!? PUT ME DOWN!

LIKE THE MAN SAID, I'M **LEAVIN'**, BABY! I'M **BLASTIN' RIGHT OUT** OF THIS CRUMMY ASTEROID!

IT'LL BE A WOW OF A SMASH, GIRL — MAYBE ALL DIE — YOU, THEM, MAYBE EVEN ME!

— MAYBE EVERYTHING GETS BUSTED WIDE OPEN! NO MORE AIR, NO MORE ASTEROID, **NO MORE NOTHIN'**!

GO TELL'M GIRL! WARN'M! GO, GIRL! GO!

HE SLAMMED THE HATCH, DIVED FOR THE CONTROLS AND PRESSED IGNITION. THE JET CHAMBERS IGNITED WITH DULL CONCUSSIONS... HE WAITED AS THOUGH FROZEN FOR THE TEMPERATURE GAUGE TO REACH FIRING HEAT, NOT KNOWING WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN THE JETS BEGAN THEIR THRUST...

THERE WAS A HOLLOW EXPLOSION AS FLAME FLARED FROM THE JETS... THE LAUNCH SHUDDERED, YAWED, HEATED... WITH A SQUEAL OF METAL IT GRATED FORWARD...

AND THE SHIP BURST OUT INTO SPACE WITH THE SOARING FLIGHT OF A BIRD SET FREE.

Next Week
MIRROR... MIRROR...

Gully Foyle 9

By ALFRED BESTER & STANLEY PITT ASSOCIATES

★ABANDONED BY SS VORGA ON THE WRECK OF SS NOMAD, GULLY FOYLE IS OBSESSED BY A DRIVE FOR VENGEANCE WHICH COMPELS HIM TO ATTEMPT SELF-RESCUE BY GETTING NOMAD UNDER WAY.

HE INSPECTED NOMAD'S POWER CENTER. SINCE THE SUPPLY CHANNELS TO MOST OF THE SHIP HAD BEEN SHATTERED, THE AUTOMATIC SHUT-DOWN SYSTEMS HAD REDUCED THE OUTPUT OF THE ATOMIC PILE TO A SAFE MINIMUM LEVEL OF SLEEPER OPERATION.

THE MASSIVE COMPUTER GLOWED FEEBLY, MAKING ITS STANDARD SALUTATION IN A VOICE THAT WAS AN OLD-AGE PARODY OF ITS INTENDED CRISP ALERTNESS.

HOW DO YOU DO? COMPUTER "BRIGHTBOY" AT YOUR SERVICE, SIR. PLEASE OBLIGE WITH NAME, RANK, FILE NUMBER AND AUTHORISATION FOR REQUEST. REPEAT: WHO ARE YOU? WHAT IS YOUR REQUEST?

I'M THE COMMANDER, BRIGHTEYES. NOW LISTEN TO ME...

LATER

COURSE FOR JUPITER SET ON AUTO CONTROL. LAUNCHING DELAYED. CHECKDOWN OF DRIVE SHOWS MAIN ROCKET AND THREE TAIL JETS INOPERATIVE, ONE TAIL JET OPERATIVE. FIRING OF ONE TAIL JET WILL CAUSE SHIP TO GYRATE. AWAITING FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS.

LET IT BURN, BRIGHTEYES! LET'S GET MOVIN'!

THE LONE AFT JET SLAMMED OUT FLAME WITH A SOUNDLESS VIBRATION THAT SHOOK THE SHIP. THE OFF-CENTER THRUST TWISTED NOMAD INTO A SPIN.

THE SUDDEN SURGE OF ACCELERATION SHOOK LOOSE HUGE MASSES OF DEBRIS THAT THUNDERED THROUGH THE SHIP... GULLY FOYLE WAS CAUGHT UP IN THIS TUMBLEWEED IN SPACE AND SMASHED UNCONSCIOUS.

HE LAY PINNED IN THE CENTER OF HALF A TON OF WRECKAGE— HELPLESS AND BARELY ALIVE.

WHO ARE YOU?

WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

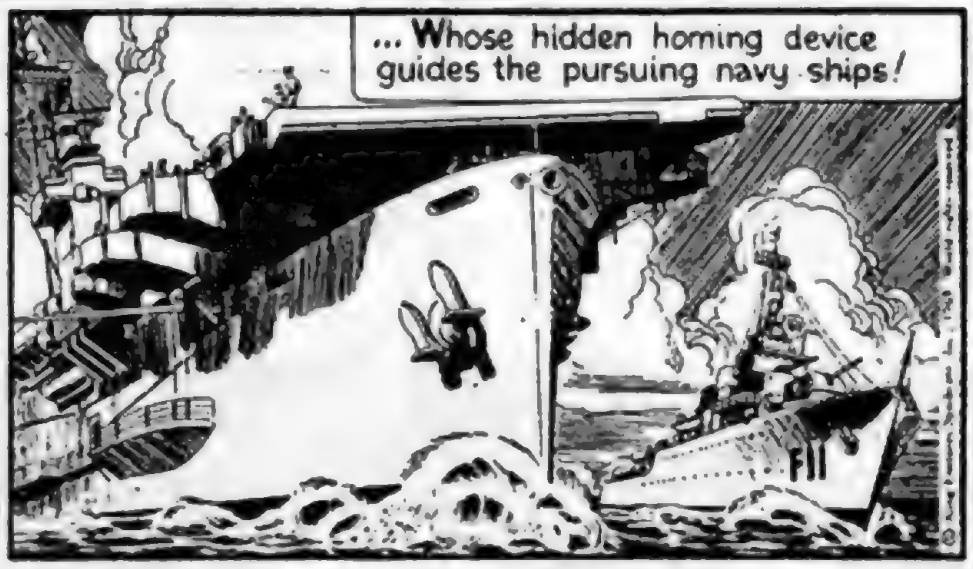
WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

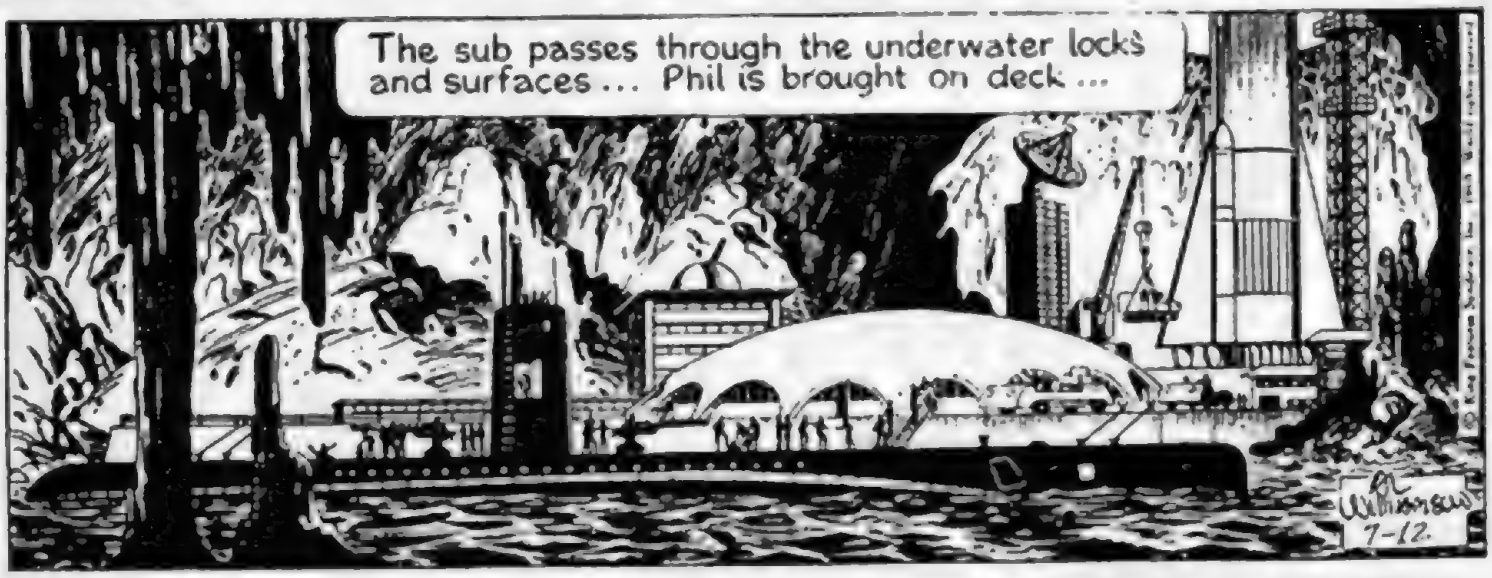
WHERE ARE YOU BOUND?

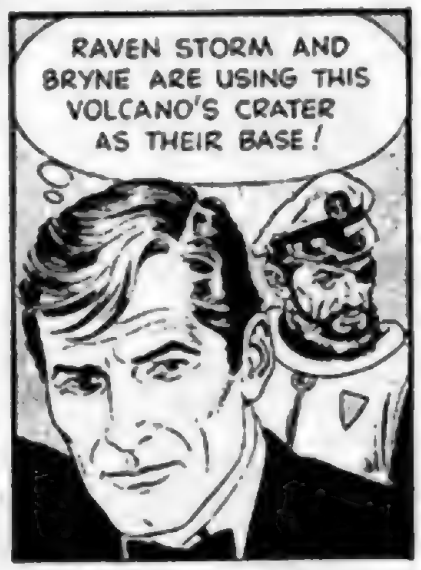
Next Week
DESTINATION JUNKHEAP

Secret Agent Corrigan

by Archie Goodwin & Stanley Pitt







THE TIME'S PAST FOR PLAYING VILLAINESS, RAVEN!
YOU DON'T WANT BRYNE LAUNCHING THAT MISSILE... OTHERWISE, YOU'D HAVE FIRED WHEN I GRABBED YOUR GUN!

joe wehrle jr.

The following strip might be considered a sequential folio of drawings, as it basically illustrates my short story, The Bandemar, which appeared in the Signet anthology, Clarion, An Anthology of Speculative Fiction, edited by Robin Scott Wilson.

The character of the forest girl Fawn the Dark-Eyed had its genesis in comic format, and while the Narbekian tales were never commercially successful until written as fiction, it seems only fitting that they occasionally return to panel narration.

There are about half a dozen Narbekian stories written to date, with several more plotted, and in addition to these I've had the first half of a full-length novel gathering dust for some time. In mind is a collection titled Tales of Narbek Forest, hopefully with a profusion of illustrations, but I have some doubts about both the economic and commercial feasability of the project.

The drawings presented here were done about 2 1/2 years ago, and represent a rather more experimental approach than my usual work in comics.

A note on Bandemars: They are small, secretive and fleetingly-seen denizens of the Narbek Forest, about whom little is known. Bandemars are reputedly thieves, and may even have some degree of intelligence, for at any rate they evince a most uncanny cleverness. They are decidely not amiable creatures, yet on the other hand no evidence exists that they have ever done harm to anyone or anything. Most probably, they are better left alone. --- JOSEPH WEHRLE, JR.

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?
-WILLIAM BLAKE

Gully Foyle

(Continued from Page 8)

Considering all the problems they had to overcome, it seemed an unfitting reward for poor old Gully and his companions. Right or wrong, we made grumbling noises about what we would do the "next time". But the damage was done . . . we had lost our taste for marketing our own comic strip for a long time.

But GULLY FOYLE wasn't wasted. The promotional book caused considerable interest in comic circles. Al Williamson showed the book to Carmine Infantino and Dick Giordano (who demanded copies for their own collections) and this resulted in Stan doing a comic for THE WITCHING HOUR #14. Again, Williamson showed the book to Western Publishing and the Pitts were asked to do a comic for BORIS KARLOFF #33. The artwork for National was below Stan's usual standards and the reproduction at Western spoiled some nice art -- but, at least, Stan had the honor of being the first Australian to do original material for U.S. comic books.

Al Williamson made contact with Stan Pitt soon after the appearance of the Yarmak article in ERB DIGEST (about five years ago). For many years, Al had considered Stan to be his counterpart . . . hidden in a far-off land . . . unable to be contacted. In his first Flash Gordon comic for King Features, Al had swiped a few panels from Stan's Silver Starr, in the hope that it might bring some response. Stan was immensely flattered that an artist of Williamson's calibre should use his material for reference, but did nothing about it. When they finally established contact, the Pitt-Williamson meeting became a mutual-admiration society! It is not surprising, then, that Williamson should ask Pitt to "ghost" a Secret Agent Corrigan story for him. Stan agreed and this 11-week sequence commenced appearing on the 16th of June, 1969. Although stiff at first, Pitt was really hitting his stride by the end of the story. Williamson was also responsible for getting Stan a number of other art jobs -- so, when the time comes for someone to write the Stanley Pitt Saga, the assistance and consideration given by Al Williamson should not be overlooked. Without it, Pitt may never have recovered from the battering he absorbed with GULLY FOYLE . . . and may have drifted away completely from the comics medium. And that would have been a great loss to the graphic story world.

--- John T. Ryan

the bandeman
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BREAKDOWNS

LETTERS

EDITOR'S NOTE: I've decided that it would be easier to merge the discussion column, "Breakdowns", with the letter column. So that means that this section will be the "clearing house" for all types of discussion sent to SofW -- both comments on the previous issue, and more general criticism, analysis, etc. about any aspect of the graphic medium you might care to discuss.

And so, with that in mind, let's start the proceedings with a missive from ...

JAN STRNAD, Wichita, Kansas

I'm going to disagree with Rick Norwood (referring to "Breakdowns" in SofW #11). His view is very narrow and would keep a lot of good material from ever appearing in the comics (or comix). Case in point: Bob Kline. He's done absolutely no strips for a long while; but when approached with a T. Casey Brennan script, he agreed to return to the fold. When this deal fell through, he again did nothing in the comic strip line until I asked him if he'd like to collaborate. He agreed and will have a 16-page fantasy strip in Anomaly 1. One thing I might point out: when I asked him how involved I should be with the artwork for the strip, he requested a page-by-page, panel-by-panel script and, if possible, brief sketches (a la Archie Goodwin or Harvey Kurtzman). From what I've seen of the strip, I think it'll be worthwhile. No, it's not a great literary masterpiece, it won't revolutionize the comic art world, and it's not going to win recognition for our ignored and maligned medium; but I think a lot of people will find it entertaining, and for me, that's enough.

Also in response to Rick's comments that collaborations will result in third-rate strips, I'd like to disagree. I think he's again taking a very narrow view, assuming that "artists should stick to art" and that "writers should stick to prose"; why can't each benefit from each? Again, an example: how I've worked with Richard Corben. I'll send him a plot synopsis; he then does very sketchy breakdowns, adjusting the story as he sees fit; I proof these breakdowns, suggesting changes if I wish and rewriting Richard's dialogue if I think parts can be improved; Richard then does the finished art. At any stage of the process, the strip can be altered by a letter or phone call from one of us to the other -- our ideas can be exchanged, or one can build on the ideas of the other, or we can discuss sticky areas that will be hard to write or draw. It's a mutual thing, like your "Rites of Man!"

One problem that Rick has is that he thinks of a writer only as someone who writes words, and an artist only as someone who draws pictures. A lot goes into a script besides dialogue and panel captions, and the way in which a panel or panel sequence is drawn has a vast influence on the storytelling power of the strip. Even when working, as Warren does, with a writer who writes a script and an artist who illustrates it, the two seemingly distinct jobs overlap and -- hopefully -- dovetail. When the writer and the artist can communicate and when their minds work in similar but distinct ways, then the end product is often much better than either one could have produced on his own.

Besides, isn't Rick Norwood the clown who dressed up as Charlie Brown for the 1969 World S-F Convention and then fell through the huge movie screen during the costume show? And then everyone had to pitch in money, like a couple hundred dollars to pay the hotel to fix it up? What does he know?

Speaking of screwballs, Ditko is really scarey. His SPIDER-MAN is unsurpassed; but his philosophy is so unrealistically simplistic it's frightening. As for Mr. A as a comic strip character, I much preferred him as the hard-boiled fanatic in Witzend #3 rather than the preaching fool he's become since then. As a form of communication, however, his later work is a tremendous example of top-notch propaganda (not meant to be derogatory); the drawings do a superb job of emphasizing and dramatizing Ditko's ideas. I have no doubt but that anyone forced to read these diatribes day in and day out would eventually succumb to their illogical logic and the force of the presentation. They do have a lot of impact, the ideas are presented clearly, and nothing is open to interpretation, nothing is ambiguous. And the strip jumps right out at you with something close to the aggressiveness that Ditko deplores when it's used by the opposition.

I've been wondering about two opposing viewpoints of my own lately. Sometimes I tell myself: the comic strip is primarily visual, like the movies; strips should be cinematic. Other times I think: but why toss away one advantage that comics have over movies, their stability on a printed page? Ever go through a good EC story without reading the captions? Would those Bradbury adaptations have been better with less verbiage? Some strips, it seems, demand captions to set the mood or to explain what's going on inside the character's head, to specify a locale or change of time, or to compress action that would be boring if drawn out in full. Is then, that caption best which captions least? I think that's another unsupportable generalization. I'd agree with anyone who demanded that each word in a caption should justify its existence there, but I also think "unnecessary" captions are well worth having if they're entertaining. And once again, I don't see why a standard rule has to be formulated -- let the caption:artwork ratio fit the story and fit the creators of the story; whatever works.

((For those fans confused by Jan's mention of Anomaly #1 -- a first issue -- don't think this letter is merely incredibly old . . . . As I understand it, he plans on continuing publication of Anomaly as an underground comic, presumably with new numbering to avoid confusion on the comix market.

As for your dilemma about captions and so on, I would suggest that it's mostly a matter of value judgement. Therefore, there's almost certainly no "right" or "wrong" method in constructing comic strips. You're absolutely right there needn't (and shouldn't) be a standard formula. The graphic story world should be large enough to accommodate all approaches. -- Bill))

RICHARD KYLE, Long Beach, California

It's important to remember that the first all-new comics began in 1935 -- Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson's NEW COMICS and FUN COMICS, the predecessors of today's DC line. I also believe FAMOUS FUNNIES may have published some original material in their otherwise all-reprint magazine -- or it may have been another reprint publication. In any event, if Eisner was the first to do original work for comics, it could not have been in WOW.

BREAKDOWNS

CHUCK ROBINSON II, Edenton, N.C.

About the only way I can describe SofW #11 is . . . impressive. And I was impressed. Sanborn's cover was well-executed. It seemed magical, fairy-like, and reminded me -- for some odd reason -- of George Metzger's work. I like it.

Next, you have a cartoon by Frank Frazetta. Well, I must honestly say I like his book covers and serious drawings better, but it's still nice to see a piece by Frazetta turn up, no matter what it is.

Then we find Steve Ditko's Mr. A. And this was a treat. Ditko is certainly one of the finest in the business, now or ever. It's just a shame that he doesn't do art for either of the major companies anymore. But to get down to it, I really enjoyed Mr. A. I can't say I agreed with his arguments all the time, but Ditko has a way of convincing you by showing you things. This was an excellent study in propaganda, and beautifully drawn.

The article on Will Eisner was interesting reading. And that's about all an article can be expected to accomplish.

Captain America Bunny was the first item in the issue to disappoint me. Let me explain: I do not usually like funny animal strips. The only way I can take them is if they offer some social criticism in a humorous form. In short, satire. Funny animals being funny for their own sake (i.e. goofy situations, inane remarks, etc.) almost never amuse me. I found very little in CAB that could be described as satire; I found many things that might be labeled inane.

The E.C. Horror Library review was informative. I like to get as many opinions as I can on something like the E.C. reprints before I shell out twenty bucks. ((Excuse me for interrupting here, but I thought I'd insert a comment I believe Roger Hill made to me. While the E.C. Horror Library might seem like a good bargain today, it must be remembered that the book will depreciate in value, whereas every indicator we know of tells us that the actual E.C. comics will appreciate in value -- in other words, get more expensive (heaven help us).))

"Rites of Man!" was all right . . . if unspectacular. The artwork was above par, but Sanborn is no Frazetta, in "his own individual way" or any other way. Unless he's referring to an ego-trip. What's more, I think I would safely bet that he never will be. His work is too sketchy at times, marked by huge, shaded dark areas for no apparent reason. Though he did tell the story, his art was generally unattractive. The story wasn't all so great anyhow. It was just one of those "filler-type" pieces that you read, then mentally sigh, and say "big deal." And it was far too preachy.

A lot of the writers in the "Breakdowns" discussion column seemed to think that underground comics were about the best items in the graphic field. I would hesitate to make a statement like that, but to each his own. I guess I am nostalgic or corny or something, but I'll take a good ol' superhero rescuing his gal from the clutches of an evil-villain over off-color jokes any day. I mean, the underground stuff has its place, and it does entertain, but can a serious comic fan really say that is the direction he wants to see the graphic story take? I really think improvements on the basic adventure strip are coming. There are some great comics out now (CONAN, TARZAN, WEIRD WORLDS, KULL, WEREWOLF, etc.) so I feel that things aren't too bad. Still, I'd like to see a huge comic, perhaps 100 pages, with an adaptation of a Conan novel. A graphic novel is the one goal I would like to see surmounted more than any other.

((I'll leave it up to the readers to comment on that last paragraph, but with regard to your reaction to my statement that Bob Sanborn could become as good as Frazetta in his own individual way, don't forget that this was Bob's first comic strip, and that I was speaking of his future as an artist. Obviously, he has a long way to go before he could hope to match Frazetta, and Bob is the first to admit it.))

JOHN BENSON, New York, New York

Your comments on the Harvey Spirit reprint books are not clear. Are you aware that the entire first story of each issue (as well as the 2 page fillers) is new work? These were almost certainly done by Eisner's P.S. MAGAZINE staff with probably supervision of Eisner.

Incidentally, I just saw two recent issues of P.S., #224 (Oct. 71) and 231 (Feb. 72). The presentation, the Eisner-esque art style, every facet of the two books are identical, except for one little thing -- the "Will Eisner" signature on the front cover has been replaced by a "Chuck Kramer" signature on the newer book, thus proving the rumors that Eisner lost his P.S. contract.

You didn't mention one of the more interesting Spirit artists -- the fellow who did most of 1946, whose name I believe is John Spranger. Roger Brand would know this. Roger also told me the name of the artist who did those intricate city-scapes that would appear on the splash pages -- I think it was Abe Kanigsen.

((Well, asked and answered in one issue -- Holy Moley!))

CRAIG WOOD, Bangor, Maine

For the most part, I felt Sense of Wonder #11 was an excellent magazine, and especially considering the amount of improvement over #10. However, four things spoiled the issue for me. First are the two exposed breasts of the woman on your cover. Now, don't get my number wrong, fellas. I believe that the female body is beauti-

ful, but not when it is exposed in such a demeaning, and frankly disgusting, manner.

Thirdly, the suggestion of a p---s on Page 5, Panel 3 of "Rites of Man!" was blatantly obscene. While I am no expert on the Bible, aren't such scenes prohibited by the Lord? How can I subscribe to a non-Christian fanzine?

And lastly, I discovered the work "f--k" or, more precisely, "f-----g" in your reprint from MOTHERS OATS in the discussion column. This is nothing short of gross and immoral. I would have thought that you, an editor of one of the most popular fanzines around, would be above such filthy language.

I must warn you that if I should ever see that sort of smutty language in SofW again, I will cancel my subscription.

((I assume you mean the word "penis" and "fucking", and all I can do, Craig, is reiterate that Sense of Wonder is not a children's magazine; no one is forcing you to subscribe, and I apologize if you have been offended. My policy remains unchanged, however.))

RONN FOSS, Decatur, Indiana

I received Sense of Wonder #10 and 11 -- much appreciated. Sorry I haven't been able to reply sooner.

It must have been a long time since I've seen SofW, as it surely has changed and improved tremendously.

Fantasy overtones, as in the covers, are always enjoyable. The inside front cover to #10, a la Heinrick Kleig, was well-done, but your own Assembled Man comic strip is the real surprise; you've gotten really good with the inks, and the drawing (pencils) are looking fine. There's a quality about your work I really like, as I do Frank Thorne, Mort Meskin, Frank Robbins, and Sanho Kim -- a not-too-tight, over clean depth I try to achieve with my own art. I for one like what you're doing; it's refreshing.

#11 has a very professional look, due to the Frazetta cartoon and the Ditko pages opening the issue; he has a point, but has pushed it beyond its extreme, I feel. Yet again, the time of soft-peddling a message has gone. I suppose one has to be hard-hitting to reach jaded people anymore . . . sugar-coated medicine cancels itself out.

"Rites of Man!" was extremely effective; just crude and rough enough to be dramatic -- yet amazing that this is the artist's first work; he has to be inspired. ((I didn't say that was Bob's first work -- he's been drawing for several years.))

I think the comic strip is an ideal vehicle to communicate a message whether you agree with it or not. Hell, look at Will Eisner's military indoctrination/training work -- it works . . . the graphic medium is most effective, even moreso than films which are usually forgotten minutes after viewing. A strip is permanent, to be reviewed again and again. Perhaps this says something for our level of intellect?

((The reaction to "The Defenders" (Mr. A) has been mixed, but even those vehemently opposed to Mr. Ditko's philosophy grant that he has used the comic strip as an effective teacher.

Re: his army contracts, Will Eisner said (in John Benson's excellent interview in Witzend #6) in part: "What I'm doing for the Army today is instructional and educational material. We're teaching people how to maintain their equipment. I'm a teacher . . . I don't feel the slightest feeling of guilt, or separation, or any relationship between that and what I might think about war as war."

I doubt if Ditko is as detached from the substance of Mr. A. In fact, I know that Mr. A reflects his own personal beliefs. To each his own.))

PETER TOWNSHEND, Juneau, Alaska

As I look over my copy of SofW #11, I seem to detect the beginnings of an excellent fanzine. I couldn't honestly apply that worn-out adjective to this issue, but the seeds for future growth are quite obvious.

What are the chances of having a 4-color cover like Star-Studded Comics or Funnyworld? That would enhance the appearance of your zine a hundred-fold, though it would also drain your pocketbook considerably. Perhaps as you sell more copies you can get to the point where four-colors are feasible.

You know, there just aren't many good, solid article fan magazines around. And some of the fanzines frequently named as "top zines" are actually barren when it comes to thoughtful, mature articles. Articles with some depth, meat.

One of the faults with SofW #11 is that it reads through so fast. This is partially due to the amount of strips. Now, while I like strips as much as the next guy, I feel they do take up too much space in a fanzine as small as yours.

But, whatever the course you chart, I'll be interested to ride along.

((You're only too right . . . four-color or process color covers are extremely expensive. If this issue sells as fast as #11, I may be able to swing it next time. But I can't promise anything at this point.

Sense of Wonder is, hopefully, going to fill (to as great an extent as it can) the true lack of good article zines. I'm glad you'll be along, and I hope you won't be a crowd of one.))

THAT'S ALL THE ROOM WE HAVE FOR LETTERS THIS TIME; THE LENGTH OF "BREAKDOWNS" WILL VARY ACCORDING TO THE NUMBER OF INTERESTING LETTERS WE RECEIVE.

BILL LOVES TO GET YOUR LETTERS, FOLKS! HE GETS VERY LONELY AND DEPRESSED IF YOU DON'T WRITE!
HIS ADDRESS IS 2211 CAROL, LEWISTON, IDAHO, 83501... DO ME A FAVOR AND DROP HIM A LINE!
C. J. Beck June 1972

JACK KIRBY, MODERN MYTHOLOGIST

BY ROBERT COSGROVE

All the action, the drama, and the excitement of myth have always been present in comics at their best, and nowhere has this been more true than in the work of writer-artist, Jack Kirby. From the beginning of his career, Kirby has exhibited a persistent fascination with myth -- ranging from his early days on MERCURY right on up through THOR.

With the coming of Kirby's so-called "Fourth World" series at National, Kirby deliberately set out to create a mythology wholly his own -- a mythology that would truly be "an epic for our time."

The power of mythological "archetypes" or universal symbols, seems to be that they combine a common, universal, human meaning with a specific form that is peculiar to a certain culture. Thus, while an archetypal figure is unique in himself, his meaning is subconsciously understood by peoples of varied cultures.

In view of the current revival of interest in mythology, and of Kirby's continuing efforts in that field, it seemed an appropriate time to attempt to analyze Kirby's work from the viewpoint of mythological criticism. It is only one of many approaches, one which sometimes leads to over-interpretation, and is not very useful in evaluating aesthetic value. However, once its limitations are understood, it can be a meaningful way to increase the reader's understanding and appreciation.

The following article suggests certain archetypal patterns -- and then sketches the ways in which Kirby's characters follow those patterns.

* * * * *

The story of the Creation is the most fundamental, most basic component of any mythology, the foundation upon which the entire mythos rests. It is not surprising, then, that in the first issue of Kirby's pivotal book, THE NEW GODS, Kirby chose to begin with the creation theme, a theme which he elaborated upon in the opening pages of the very next issue. Kirby chose to build his new mythos upon the dark Norse tales of Ragnarok, the final destruction of Thor and his companions, the heroes Kirby had worked with at Marvel. According to Kirby, "the holocaust which destroyed the old gods split their ancient world asunder," creating the world of the New Gods on the one hand, and the evil home of Darkseid, Apokolips, on the other. And so, the new universe -- the second genesis.

The Great American Myth is the Paradise Lost myth, the myth of the Edenic garden, of paradise, innocence, unspoiled beauty and the American Adam. Inevitably, it becomes the story of the Fall, of the loss of innocence. It is the story of Rappacini's Daughter and of Huckleberry Finn, the theme of Melville, James, and Hemingway. As the "New Eden", America has been called many names -- "the New Jerusalem", "the Promised Land", and many others. However many times the harsh reality of evil has seemingly shattered the myth with brutal finality, however cynical and despairing the mood of the nation becomes, the myth returns, working both good and evil. In its most recent incarnation, the President of the United States called it "the Great Society," a vision shared in some respects by a civil rights leader named Martin Luther King.

Kirby introduced several Edens in the very first book of his fourth world series, THE FOREVER PEOPLE #1, and in JIMMY OLSEN. In the Olsen book, Jimmy and the Newsboy Legion travel to Habitat, a city within the mysterious Wild Area, constructed entirely of giant tree trunks and populated by the Outsiders, a group of drop-outs who have fled the corruption of the outside world in order to "do their own thing." In FOREVER PEOPLE, Superman -- ever more American than Kryptonian -- becomes the seeker of the garden, the new world, the unattainable "Supertown". Continually, Kirby chooses to depict New Genesis as a place of unspoiled beauty, as a garden of happiness. "There are no structures on its green surface -- except those which serve the cause of well-being." Note that NEW GODS #7 is the story of how the snake entered the garden, and for a short while, succeeded in corrupting it. Finally, an outraged Izaya cries, "This is Darkseid's way," and in realizing the problem, corrects it. Note, as always with Kirby, the symbolic names.

Highfather and Darkseid are two of the richest, most complex figures in the Kirby mythos, interesting by themselves, fascinating when viewed as part of the entire mosaic. Darkseid is, of course, just another name for Satan, that figure of absolute evil who has so captivated the imagination of writers through the ages. Hence, the amusing comment by Evanier and Sherman in THE FOREVER PEOPLE #6 letter column that "all Jack would tell us . . . [re: Darkseid's age] is that Darkseid is 'very, very old.' " As old, in fact, as time itself. In Freudian terms, the master of Apokolips is the Id, while to Jung, he would represent the Shadow, the ugly side of the personality, or as his name itself expresses so well, the dark side. Highfather, on the other hand, represents the super-ego, that part of our personality ingrained by society, which would have us behave as angels. (A bit of an over-simplification.) He follows the classic pattern of the Initiation Hero (see the Hero section). That is to say, after suffering through a series of ordeals (the bloody Great Clash), the hero (Izaya the Inheritor) passes from ignorance and folly (acceptance of war on Darkseid's terms) to spiritual maturity and adulthood, undergoing a transformation and rebirth. (Izaya becomes Highfather. Note that the physical aspects of the change parallel the spiritual ones. E.g., his youthful black hair becomes white, the color not only of age but of power and mystic inscrutability.) Taken as a pair, Highfather and Darkseid represent two sides of the same coin -- both are authority figures (note Highfather's staff of authority) but one is good, and loved, while the other is evil and hated. Where Highfather is the conscious ideal, Darkseid is the repressed hostility figure. Note how Kirby continually plays with the father-son relationships between Highfather and Darkseid and Scott Free and Orion. As Metron says in NG #1, when the Source dispatches Orion to earth: "How wondrously wise is the source! Who is more ready to fight the father -- than the son!" The villain himself continually hints that he is the repressed, hated father, the evil id figure which man refuses to acknowledge. Consider this statement in FOREVER PEOPLE #5: "I am the revelation! The tiger-force at the core of all things! When you cry out in your dreams -- it is Darkseid that you see!" Or this one, in the next issue of the same magazine: "How can he [man] cope with me -- by shunning me -- his other face." How, indeed? Young Esak neatly sums up the relationship between the two fathers in FP #7: "Darkseid is the fire-pit of destruction!! Highfather is the tranquil green of morning!! -- the time when the song of life begins!!"

There are three major archetypal female figures: the Great (and good) mother, the Soul-Mate or ideal match for the hero or prince, and the Terrible Mother. Perhaps Kirby will assign Mother Box and Barda the first two roles, but right now, he seems highly preoccupied with the last one, the Terrible Mother. The Terrible Mother appears in fairy tales, for example, as the Wicked Witch of Hansel and Gretal. Often she is not really a mother at all, but a step-mother (Cinderella) usurper of the real mother's place. Granny Goodness neatly fits this pattern: she is

Left: Jack Kirby studies the work of a young artist.
Photograph by Vincent Davis
Copyright 1971 by Richard Kyle. Printed by permission.

not a real mother, but has taken the appearance and name of a "granny". She represents the hated-mother image, the wicked authority figure. Her function is to civilize her charges, to make them loyal followers of Darkseid. Thus, she assumes the role of a super-ego twisted to serve the purposes of the id -- Granny is 1984 and Brave New World with a serving of apple pie thrown in for good measure. Her wards find themselves, in Darkseid's words, "jammed into that clanking mechanism Granny calls an orphanage," (paraphrase) there to suffer will-sapping chemical food and slogans which read: "You're not a beast -- if you kill for Darkseid" and "You're not a liar -- if you lie for Darkseid!"

"Love him! Serve great Darkseid! Wear your pointed helmets proudly where he leads! Die for him --- and reward Granny!" -- that is the credo of Granny Goodness, the lesson of her orphanage. It is a lesson that she has proven most successful in teaching, for so far at least, Kirby has revealed only two people who have escaped from her clutches: Mr. Miracle himself, Scott Free, who had the assistance of Metron in resisting Granny's training, and unbeknownst to him, the approval of Darkseid; Barda, presumably, made it by herself. Indeed, it would appear that Granny's pointy-headed warriors develop a real, if sick affection for their wicked "mother". For example, when a squad of warriors is about to tackle Scott and his assistant, Oberon, one of them exclaims with pleasure and anticipation: "We'll take them both! Granny will be doubly delighted!" And later, when the deed is done: "They are ours! The traitor and his gnat! We'll be heroes to Granny!" Whereupon his colleague replies: "She'll sing our praises and give us gifts! I can't wait to get back!" The fierce warriors are as little children, competing for Mommy's approval. Granny trains her wards by employing a grotesque parody of the Cub scouts -- instead of wolf, bear and lion, her charges are worms, rats, and tigers.

As for Granny's motherly love, it appears to be nothing more than calculated sadism, concealed by a thin veneer of an affection that appears real to her brainwashed orphans. "Poor Scott Free!" she laments in MR. MIRACLE #2, "How he must be suffering! It's too bad he couldn't learn to see things -- Granny's way!" This is a sympathy belied by her earlier outburst, "Granny Goodness wants to kill Scott Free! He was the first to run away from her institution!" However, it does seem that Granny has played her little game so long that she sometimes forgets that it is a sham herself. It would be a challenging role for an actress, since how she spoke Granny's lines would be the clue to her true personality.

Granny is not the only example of the "Terrible Mother," for Darkseid's late mother, Queen Hegra, neatly fills the role. This woman is fat, ugly, loud, a piggish eater, and repulsive. In spite of Steppenwolf's assertion that she is "clever and cunning -- and a plotter" she does not appear too intelligent. She is most likely clever in the sense of the stereotype used-car dealer.

A final female archetype is Tigra, Darkseid's wife, whose red hair and "fighting, snarling, killer-cat" demeanor, to quote Darkseid again, gives away her personality. She is the "Shrew Wife," so common in the plays of the middle ages.

There are three basic hero patterns, of which Orion falls loosely into the first pattern, that of the Quest Hero, the savior or deliverer. Briefly, this type of hero battles ogres and monsters, undertakes impossible tasks (labors of Hercules, for example), answers insolvable riddles (Sphinx's question to Oedipus), and generally overcomes insurmountable obstacles on his way to winning power, kingdom glory, and a good-looking princess. Orion is a savior-hero on a quest -- note the title of NEW GODS #1: "Orion Fights for Earth!" Orion's task has been set by the white, oracle-wall, the link with the divine and mysterious "Source", which commands: "Orion to Apokolips -- then to Earth -- then to WAR!" In his brief existence, Orion has to date encountered far more monstrous foes than his fellows -- where Scott Free has battled Doctor Vundabar, Orion has faced Kalibak -- where the Forever People have battled Desaad, Orion has faced the water demons -- the Deep Six.

Orion rather closely follows another pattern, that of the Oedipus-hero. In this pattern, the hero (Orion) is the son of distinguished parents (Tigra and the then prince of Apokolips, Darkseid). The birth of the hero is usually preceded by such difficulties as secret intercourse or prolonged barrenness -- a feature dispensed with by either Kirby or Mr. Darvin of the Comics Code. There follows a prophecy, usually threatening the hero's father. Tigra does tell Darkseid that Orion will "live! He'll grow! He'll kill you!;" but this comes after, not before, the next feature, the abandonment of the hero -- where Orion is thrust into the world of New Genesis. The hero is saved, as Oedipus himself was, and brought up in the house of a royal family -- that of Highfather. Later, the hero finds his parents, takes revenge upon them, and achieves rank and distinction: three things which may be in Orion's future.

Another interesting aspect of Orion is his relationship to Jung's analysis of the three basic archetypal projections of the psyche, so vividly revealed on page 20 of NEW GODS #5. Orion's true ugly face equals Jung's shadow, the dark side of the unconscious. His handsome face, on the other hand, indicates the persona, the "actor's mask" each person shows the world. Finally, the Mother Box acts as an electronic anima, mediating between the outer and the inner Orion, and acting as his life force, his vital energy.

Orion wears purple, the color of royalty, and a red suit which matches his red hair. Red is the color of fire, blood, and passion.

The second basic hero-type is the "Initiation Hero." This hero undergoes various ordeals in passing from immaturity to adulthood. Highfather, as mentioned previously, is a classic example of the Initiation Hero. The initiation process generally consists of three steps: 1) separation and isolation of the hero from society, 2) hero's transformation, and 3) the triumphant return of the hero. Both the initiation and quest heroes are death and rebirth archetypes. Often without any change, or by the device of making it impossible for the hero to return, the initiation story becomes a rite of passage story, as in Hawthorne's My Kinsman, Major Molineux. This idea is present, somewhat, in the many tests Granny's charges -- and especially Scott himself -- must undergo. However, if Kirby suggests the rite of passage, he clearly indicates that Scott is an initiation hero. Consider: born in New Genesis, the fragile young infant is thrust into the perilous world of Apokolips, where Granny's orphanage seems to robotize him with deadly efficiency. However, within Scott Free lurks some inherent quality which, sparked by Metron, first flickers to the surface, then becomes a raging inferno of rebellion. And so comes the transformation -- Scott Free makes the crucial decision to escape to earth. There, he dons the symbol of his transformation -- his Mr. Miracle costume. Although he has returned to the side of New Genesis, Kirby has not yet shown that Scott himself fully comprehends that New Genesis is the land of his birth, and that Isaya, now Highfather, is his father.

The final archetypal hero is the sacrificial scapegoat, who, though himself innocent, must die to atone for the sins of his tribe or nation. Classic scapegoat hero: Jesus Christ. Kirby has only hinted at who may fill this role -- perhaps, again, Scott Free -- who has, after all,

already descended into hell, and arose from the "dead". However, an excellent case exists for Lightray. His costume is mostly white -- the color of power and innocence, and his name and powers relate to light, whose symbolic connotations should be obvious. In the second issue of NEW GODS, Highfather refuses to allow Lightray to travel to earth to assist Orion, indicating that he must wait for the right moment. In the third NG issue, the Black Racer -- the death figure chasing Lightray -- emphasizes his youth and innocence: "I am no respecter of tender years!" When Lightray finally enters the fray in NG #6, he first appears wrapped as a mummy, tied to a pole -- possibly a crucifix symbol. More important, however, or at least more direct, are Orion's comments. First, "The smiling lamb decided to try his hand among the wolves, after all!!" The lamb, a defenseless creature, has for years on end been a sacrificial symbol, and in the last 20 centuries, a Christ symbol. "It saddens me to see you here, Lightray! Your kind brings an undeserved honor to war!!" adds Orion, again emphasizing his friend's innocence. Lightray's actions are revealing too: instead of destroying the sender, he transforms it. When Sheridan refuses to leave the ship, Lightray will not force him. "Your father's made his choice," he simply tells Lynn. Like Christ, Lightray forced no one to accept his advice, but if they do, they -- like the sender -- are transformed. As Highfather would say, "That is the Life Equation!"

Another archetype, that of The Traitor, the betrayer of the hero, is also present in the NEW GODS epic -- his name is Metron, and as Kirby so clearly indicates in "The Pact!" Metron is a traitor indeed, for he willingly builds for Darkseid a weapon that visits upon his fellow gods untold death and destruction, all in exchange for personal gain -- the element for his Mobius chair, which will hold him, in Darkseid's words, to fulfill his "scholarly pursuits." The other gods dislike Metron, for at least one of them, Highfather, is aware of his treachery; Orion, especially, detests the master of the Mobius Chair. However, they tolerate him, perhaps because he has returned to the side of the angels, temporarily at least -- motivated in part by his hatred of Darkseid, for cold Metron has indeed emotions, but he subordinates them to intellectual pursuits. Indeed, though Judas is brilliant, he is not wise, else shrewd Darkseid would not have been able to use him as a pawn. "You'll betray us all in time, Metron!" Darkseid bluntly tells him, revealing his personal assessment of Metron's character.

Could one say of Metron that "he had lost his hold of the magnetic chain of humanity. He was no longer a brother man, opening the chambers or the dungeons of our common nature by the key of holy sympathy, which gave him a right to share in all its secrets; he was now a cold observer, looking on mankind as the subject of his experiment, and at length, converting man and woman to be his puppets, and pulling the wires that moved them to such degrees of crime as were demanded for his study?" In this writer's assessment these words almost perfectly describe Metron, though they were written by Nathaniel Hawthorne to depict Ethan Brand. And thus, an intriguing link appears, connecting two American mythologists. Hawthorne's Brand had committed "the unpardonable sin." Now, the usual definition of that sin comes from the words of Christ, who said in Mark 3, 28-29: "Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." To explicate, Jesus did not mean that there was something especially sacred about the holy spirit. Rather, since the holy spirit is the means by which man comes to accept God, receive Grace and forgiveness, he who closes his heart to the workings of the holy spirit, is very much "in danger of eternal damnation." Now Hawthorne had his own, peculiar definition of the unpardonable sin; for him, it was sin for its own sake, that is to say, sin committed without purpose, either humanitarian or utilitarian. Essentially, it is a critique of intellect, of the triumph of cold-blooded experimentation over morality. Both Hawthorne's sin and the blasphemy against the holy spirit are unpardonable because they cut man off from God. There is some evidence that Kirby subscribes -- at least in part -- to this concept of evil. For example, he continually draws a contrast between Desaad, who takes pleasure in torturing his victims, and Darkseid, who is above and disdains "mere cruelty". "I regret to say this," he tells Desaad, in FP #6, "but I don't have the stomach for your kind of pursuits!!" The third issue of Graphic Story World quotes Kirby as saying "you are nothing to Darkseid -- that is what makes him evil." True, but Darkseid's evil is utilitarian, where Metron's actions are not.

Hawthorne said his evil characters had "ice water in their veins." Orion calls Metron an "icy mask," an image more vivid than Hawthorne's, but very similar.

The fascinating thing, however, is that Metron somehow comes across as a somewhat sympathetic character -- Kirby does not condemn him with the same zeal as his fellows, the other gods. Perhaps it's a sign of the times that the Judas figure receive some sympathy. National Review, in a mixed review of Jesus Christ, Superstar, wryly observed that it was characteristic of the age that the play seemed to have a far better understanding of Judas than it did of Jesus. Well -- this writer finds "understanding" to be a sticking point, since JC's Judas has little in common with the Biblical one, but the point itself is well-taken indeed.

Thus, in summation, Metron is a new character, a close cousin of Ethan Brand, but not the same as Ethan Brand. He shares Brand's sin, it would seem, but Kirby seems to suggest that the sin is not unpardonable.

Another interesting, if minor, archetype, is that of the sorcerer. In modern times, especially in America, the scientist has assumed the role of the all-powerful magician, who can cure any and all ills. Recently, though, a reaction has set in, and Americans are moving in an equally extreme but different direction: hate of the scientist and his technological trappings. It's hard to say who is the more naive, the fellow who says there's no need to worry about population growth since science will find ways of feeding everyone, or the one who throws science out the window, who happily predicts a return to the agricultural societies of yesteryear. At any rate, Kirby has scientist-sorcerers galore -- Desaad, Doctor Bedlam, Glorious Godfrey. They reflect the dark side of technology, just as the Mother Box and Thaddeus Brown symbolize the good side. Note that Sta --- oops, Funky Flashman says that Thaddeus, "like a warlock of ancient yore -- conjured up his majestic manipulations!!"

The Sea, with its pounding waves and endless tides, is a particularly rich symbol -- it is, in symbol as well as fact, the mother of all life, as well as symbolizing spiritual mystery, the infinite, death and rebirth, timelessness and eternity. According to Jung, it is the most common symbol for the unconscious. Kirby chose to use it in conjunction with another archetypal device, that of the journey. For example, one might cite the great American archetypal novel, Huckleberry Finn, in which Huck travels down the Mississippi River, undergoing a series of symbolic deaths. Kirby opens "the Glory Boat" with a symbolic resurrection: the Christ figure, Lightray, emerging from his mummy-like bonds with the assistance of Orion. He and Lightray are thrown together with three other characters, one of which (Lynn Sheridan) is unimportant. But the other two, Richard and Farley Sheridan, are important indeed. Both men feel the awful pressure of a direct confrontation with evil incarnate, Jaffar of Apokolips, one of the Deep Six and a symbol of the cruel, death aspect of the Sea. Richard, deemed a coward by his father, rushes forward and attacks the demon, to little avail. Jaffar kills Richard. On the other hand, his father, Farley, recoils, breaks, is unable to act. His brave words stand shorn of their glory, revealed as mere sham. When Orion returns, Farley is in shock, but vows not to "run from the enemy a second time." In Richard's case, the pattern is symbolic rebirth, then death. For his father, the pattern is symbolic death, followed by an attempt at symbolic re-birth. This writer leaves it to his readers to judge whether or not that attempt is successful; personally, he feels it is not, but Kirby leaves the issue open. Finally, Richard's dead body joins "the Source" which brings this essay to its final archetype . . .

Somewhere beyond the final, impenetrable barrier at the end of the universe lies "the Source", a mysterious force that works for good, contacting Highfather through the white wall, writing in letters of fire, and aiding the gods with the remarkable "Mother Box", which, amongst other things, allows the Forever People to become the Infinity Man. There seems to be no limit to the Source's power. The gods believe that in death, both god and demon go to the Source. Obviously, then, the Source is nothing more than the infinite, moral order which structures the universe, i.e. God.

● POSTSCRIPT ●

This article hardly exhausts the possibilities the Kirby books offer for mythic analysis -- let alone beginning a comprehensive critical analysis. And of course, two or three more issues of each Kirby title have appeared since the article's writing, which suggest new lines of exploration.

Readers might also be interested in reading an interview with Kirby which appeared in a Canadian fanzine entitled Comic and the Crypt. Where this article has attempted to show the universality of Kirby's symbols, Kirby discusses (in C&C) the problem of creating symbols that speak uniquely to the present age and time.

Unfortunately, National has now decided to limit the fourth world series to MR. MIRACLE. Kirby is moving on to other projects, and there is little doubt in the mind of at least one critic -- this one -- that some of his future efforts will display the same intense interest in myth that he has shown in the past.

Comic and the Crypt #5 (with the Kirby/Infantino interview) is a good fanzine, worth buying. It costs 70¢ per copy. To: Mark Sigal, 459 Lytton Blvd., Toronto, Ontario.

How's That Again, Jim Baby? Dept.

" Like most of the men in the comic business, Kirby was born in a New York City walk-up, August 28, 1917. "

History of Comics, Vol. 1 -- Steranko

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RECOMMENDED

COMIQUE #7 is now out. COMIQUE is a rapidly improving amateur comic strip fanzine ... one of the few left, and one of the best. It isn't perfect, but you'll probably enjoy it if amateur strips (especially in the super hero vein) are your bag. You generally get a lot for your money, as much as 70 pages or more per issue. #7 contains a strip by ye Editor, plus a cover by me, so I'm recommending it whenever I can get the chance. A good zine, for 35¢ per copy, or $1.00 for a three issue sub (it is bi-monthly), to: CHUCK ROBINSON II, 909 Cabarrus Street, Edenton, North Carolina, 27932.

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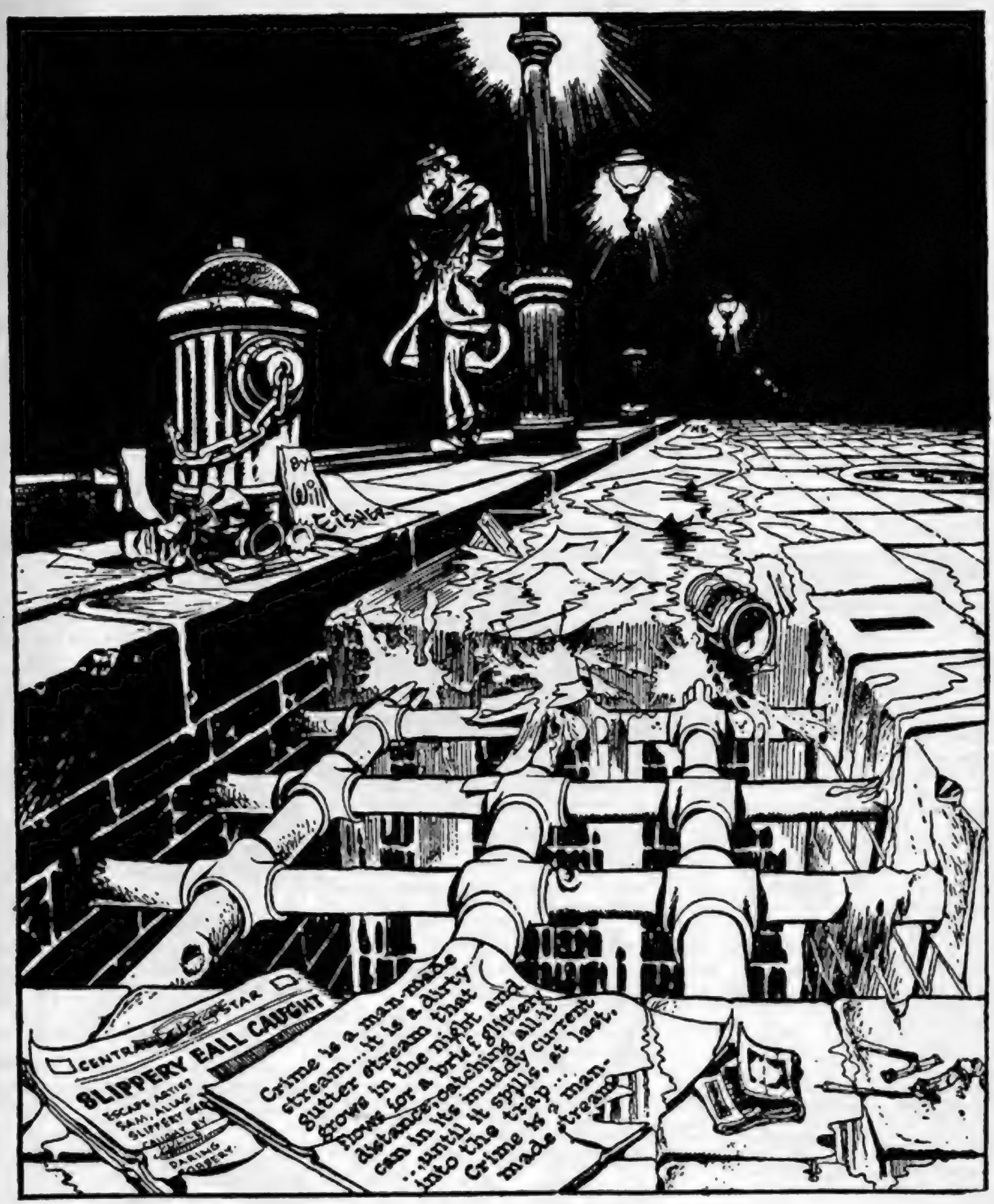
By Will Eisner
CENTRAL STAR
SLIPPERY EALL CAUGHT
ESCAPE ARTIST SAM. ALIAS SLIPPERY SAM CAUGHT BY
DARING ROBBERY
Crime is a man-made stream...it is a dirty gutter stream that grows in the night and flows for a brief glittery distance, catching all it can in its muddy current ...until it spills, at last, into the trap... Crime is a man-made stream.

The EISNER Section (pt 2)

WILL EISNER

AND CO.

ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS TO "WILL EISNER: A MAN AND HIS WORK" BY RAYMOND MILLER AND THOMAS F. FISHER, WHICH APPEARED IN SENSE OF WONDER #11.

BY JOHN T. RYAN

In Sense of Wonder #11, an article by Raymond Miller and Thomas Fisher brought to light a great deal of information about Will Eisner and those associated with him on his many projects. It, also, highlighted how little we know about the comic book artists of the 1935-1948 era. The main purpose of this article is to provide a few more details about that period . . . and I make no apologies for the emphasis placed on dates, publishers, comic titles and characters. I am indebted to Willard Ogden, Al Williamson and Kevin McQuillan for providing the basis for much of the text in the article, and to John Scanes for many of the photographic copies he provided.

* * * *

As Will Eisner's work appeared in WOW - What a Magazine! #2 (Aug. 1936), #3 (Sept. 1936) and #4 (Nov. 1936), it doesn't take much courage to predict that Eisner's work, also, appeared in the first issue of that magazine. While this issue would have appeared in June or July 1936, this would still not support the contention that Eisner "was the founder of original comic strips for the comic books." Research tells us that this honor belongs to Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson, who was in this field in 1935. However, even if Eisner wasn't the first in this field, he did more with the medium than any of his predecessors, and he was the prime mover in determining the direction that comic books would take. His contributions to, and monumental effect upon, the comic book industry can never be questioned.

The Flame, which appeared in WOW - What a Magazine!, is instantly identifiable as a forerunner to Eisner's "Hawks of the Seas." In fact, the villain of the former story was "Claw Carlos" -- and this same character turned up as a villain in an early adventure of Hawks of the Seas. Because WOW was, basically, printed in black and white, Eisner utilized half-tones . . . though not particularly effectively on this strip.

On the other hand, his use of half-tones on "Captain Scott Dalton" was most effective and I would agree with Ken Mitchell that this strip was superior in appearance to The Flame. In the previous article, the locale for Scott Dalton was described as being "set in the city ... a favorite background in any Eisner strip, and later perfected in The Spirit." On this point I part company with the previous writers' source of information. In WOW #3 and 4, the setting is the City of Lob, surrounded by a jungle and controlled by a "mad 200-year-old Monk." Dalton is assisted by Dr. Fung -- a Chinese scientist who was believed dead "after failing to return from one of his expeditions." The preface in WOW #3 indicates that this same setting prevailed in the previous issue -- so, it is my contention that, while this strip was set in a city, it was not the same type of city we associate with The Spirit. It is interesting to note that, like Claw Carlos, Eisner made further use of Dr. Fung some three years later, when this character was given his own strip in WONDERWORLD COMICS. And he was the spitting image of his 1936 predecessor.

Not mentioned in the previous article was another Eisner strip which appeared in WOW. This was a humorous strip called "Harry Karry" and it was the cover feature of WOW #3 -- which was, also, drawn by Eisner.

It should be noted that, as well as using his own name, strips in WOW #3 and 4 were signed "Bill Rensie" and "Will Erwin".

Other artists whose work appeared in this comic were Bob Kane, S.M. Iger, George E. Brenner, Dick Briefer, Vernon Henkel, Bernard Baily and Louis Ferstadt -- all of whom went on to establish themselves during that era we call "the Golden Age of Comics".

Miller and Fisher state that they were unable to discover any evidence of Eisner having any comic book work publishing prior to the end of 1937. [1]

I think this could well be the case -- and I think the major reason for this was Eisner's involvement with Editors Press Service, Inc. which operated out of 220 East 42nd Street, New York. Although small, this company was one of the first to translate U.S. newspaper strips and sell them to South America. In 1937, they decided to create some of their own strips and hired the young Will Eisner for that purpose. Eisner created many characters and then found artists like Bob Kane, Lou Fine, Bob Powell and Nick Viscardi to illustrate them. There is every indication that Eisner retained the rights to those characters he created -- which was a damn smart business maneuver for a lad who wouldn't have been much older than 17 at the time. ((He was born in 1917. -- Bill))

My knowledge of EPS comes from a remarkable comic called WAGS. It was remarkable from the point of view that it was published in the U.S.A. but strictly for export purposes. One edition went to Australia and one edition went to England. [2] It was a remarkable comic from a number of other angles. It commenced publication in November 1936 [3] and was published every week for at least four years. It may even have continued publication up to the outbreak of the Pacific War -- but the latest issue I have seen was from late 1940. This tabloid/comic contained 24 pages of

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[1] In The Great Comic Book Heroes, Jules Feiffer cites a strip by Eisner called "Muss 'Em Up" Donavan, which may have been published in 1937.

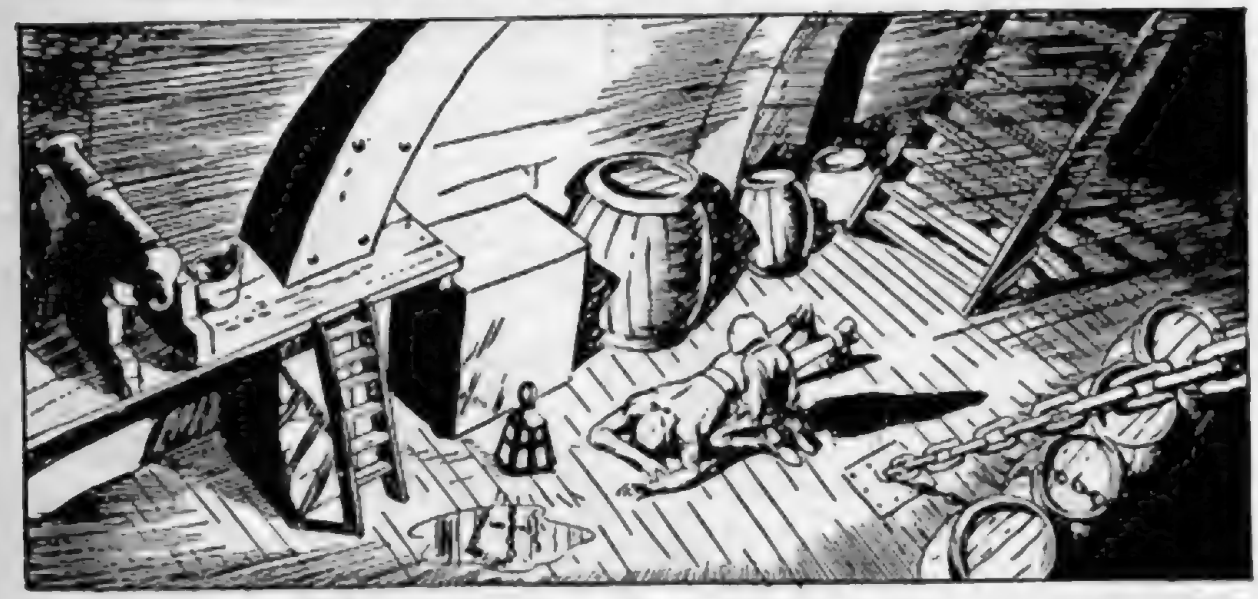
[2] According to Dennis Gifford (author of Discovering Comics, Stop Me! etc.) the British Museum records the first English edition of WAGS as being received on Jan. 1, 1937. Also, the publisher changed from Joshua B. Powers to T.V. Boardman (an English company) on July 9, 1937.

[3] All dates quoted for Australian Edition of WAGS represent the latest possible release date in Australia. My own feelings are that they were released earlier than the dates indicated and research is continuing along these lines. Initial information from both Joshua B. Powers and Greater Buffalo Press suggests that WAGS was only published between 1936 - 39 and that publication did not continue into 1940. Based on recorded newsagent release dates in Brisbane (Queensland), imprint dates on 16 issues and 1940 copyright dates on a number of the newspaper reprints -- there seems to be no question that WAGS was published well into 1940. If Joshua B. Powers is correct, it would mean that Australians saw all the Editors Press Service comics long before they ever appeared in U.S. comic books! Maybe some delving into the library archives in New York, Waterbury or even the Library of Congress would establish some clear cut dates.

HAWKS OF THE SEAS

BY Willis Rensie

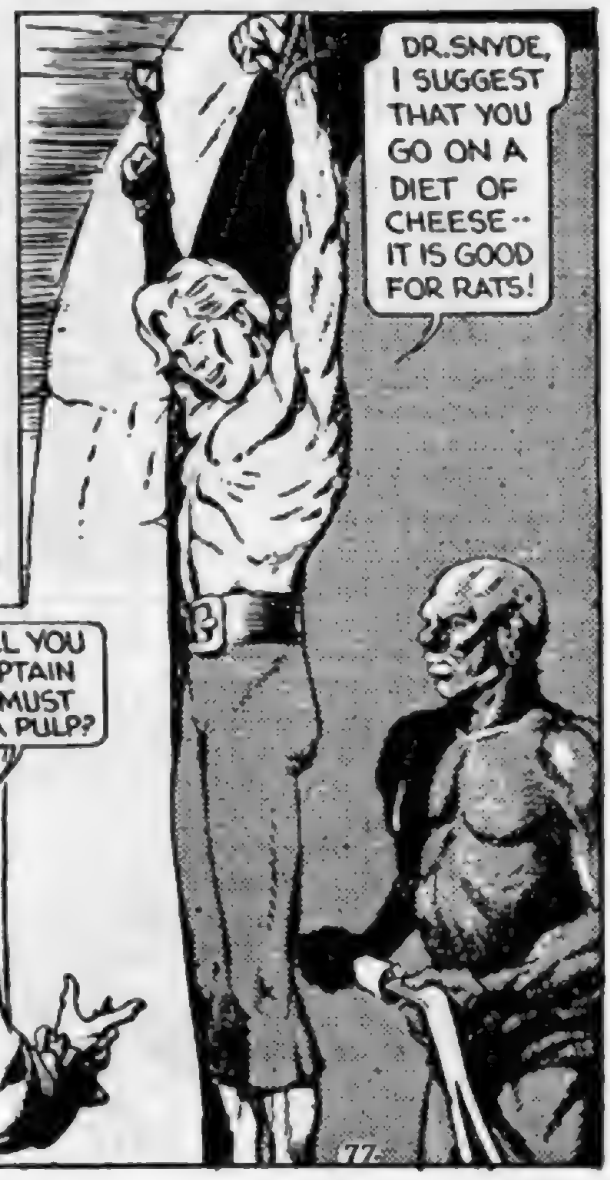
THE HAWK, BETRAYED BY THE CRAFTY DR. SNYDE, IS THROWN TO THE HOLD OF THE "SPIDER".....



AH-H-THIS WATER IS GOOD-WHAT HAPPENED?
YOU GOT ANGRY AT DR. SNYDE ---- YOU KNOCKED HIM DOWN-- HIS MEN OVERPOWERED YOU AND THREW US DOWN HERE! THEY'LL BE BACK SOON TO TRY TO MAKE US TELL WHERE THE TREASURE IS!

AND WE'LL NOT TELL THEM---NO MATTER WHAT THEY DO--I SHOULD SPANK YOU FOR EVER COMING ABOARD THIS SHIP--BUT YOU SAVED MY LIFE AND BURKE'S, BY CUTTING THAT SAIL DOWN IN TIME!
GEE, THEN YOU'RE NOT ANGRY AT ME, HAWK?

SUDDENLY THEIR CONVERSATION IS CUT SHORT AS A HATCH OPENS ABOVE THEM....
STAY JUST AS YOU ARE DOWN THERE, WE'RE COMING TO PAY YOU A LITTLE VISIT!



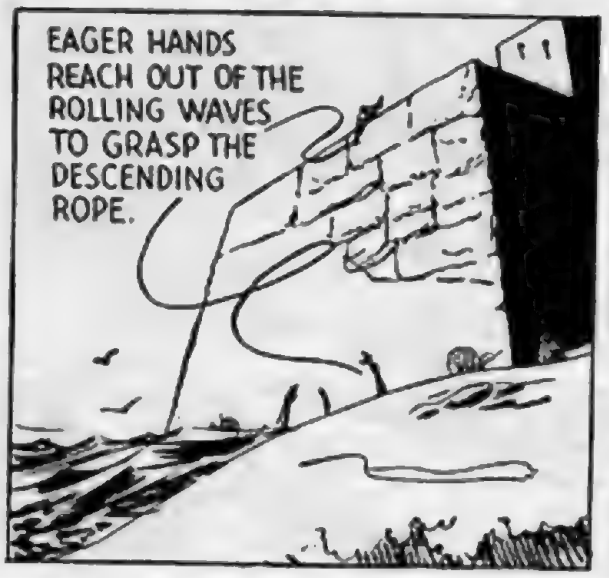
IF IT IS YOUR PLAN TO TORTURE ME, SNYDE, YOU'RE EVEN MORE STUPID THAN I THOUGHT--NOTHING YOU CAN DO WILL MAKE ME TALK!
WE SHALL SEE! WE SHALL SEE! HANG HIM BY THE WRISTS, MEN!

STOP! DON'T DO THAT TO THE HAWK!
NOW, MY AMUSING FRIEND, WILL YOU TELL ME THE LOCATION OF CAPTAIN CLOGG'S TREASURE NOW, OR MUST I HAVE YOU BEATEN TO A PULP?

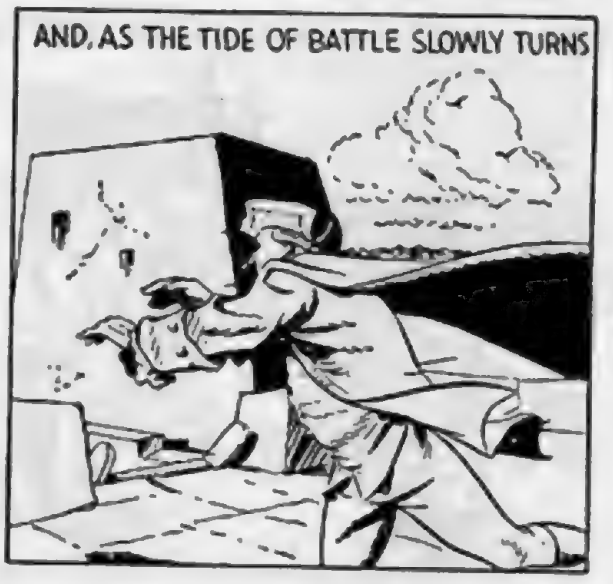
HAWKS OF THE SEAS

BY Willis Rennie

THE HAWK HAS CLIMBED THE REAR WALL OF THE TINY GARRISON THEY ARE PREPARING TO STORM



INSTANTLY THE MEN CLOSE IN BATTLE....



well-known U.S. newspaper strips as well as a lot of material which has, previously, been considered to have been created exclusively for the comic book medium. Most of the established newspaper strips were printed in full color while the material from EPS was, always, in black and white. As it contained no advertizements, paper-wise, WAGS was equivalent to a 48-page comic book for which were charged Two Pence (Tuppence)[4]. In those far-off days, a U.S. comic cost us Six Pence -- so you don't have to be a genius to see that, for the cost of a normal U.S. comic book, we could get 72 pages of top class material . . . and not have to squint your eyes at the small print.

Top class material? Certainly. In the newspaper strips there were full tabs of Tarzan (with both Foster and Hogarth art), Alley Oop, Terry and the Pirates, Dick Tracy, Little Orphan Annie, Moon Mullins, Broncho Bill, Myra North, Smitty and Toonerville Folks, as well as half pages of such strips as Smokey Stover, Smilin' Jack, Tailspin Tommy, Herky, Sgt. Stony Craig, Don Winslow, and a number of others.

But it is the black and white pages that are relevant to this article . . . the pages that came from EPS.

WAGS Vol. 2 #4 (Nov. 1937)[5] saw the introduction of Eisner's swashbuckling Hawks of the Seas. This is the same date as the Hawk's accredited appearance in FEATURE FUNNIES #2. The inking on the early pages was very scratchy in appearance -- but it wasn't long before the strip assumed the appearance that is usually associated with "genuine" Will Eisner work. While it is unlikely that this work is "pure" Eisner, it is, certainly, the work of Eisner and some of his best assistants.

Hawks of the Seas (it was never called "The Hawk" in WAGS) ran for 123 issues, at the rate of one page per issue. Even at this stage of his career, the Eisner trademark of developing the characters of the supporting players was evident. As so often happened in The Spirit, the Hawk often played a subordinate role in a number of stories. It was almost as if he was there to set the stage, then linger in the background until the final scene was to be played. One suspects that Eisner realized the value of the "no-individual-star" formula long before the TV moguls hit upon it.

Before moving on to the other EPS material that appeared in WAGS, let me draw your attention to the printing history of Hawks of the Seas. It appeared in (1) FEATURE FUNNIES; (2) WAGS - Australian Edition; (3) WAGS - English Edition; (4) JUMBO COMICS . . . it was also translated into (5) Spanish and, finally, was (6) cut up and re-used in JUMBO COMICS. This means that, within a period of three years, Eisner was able to be paid a number of times for the <u>one</u> piece of artwork. With business acumen like that, no wonder Eisner has stated that he was very rich before he was 21!

Making their debut at the same time as The Hawk was Peter Pupp by Bob Kane, and The Hunchback of Notre Dame by Dick Briefer (who had already experimented on this adaptation in WOW - What A Magazine!). Spencer Steel joined them in January 1938 -- which means that all these features were seen in Australia before they appeared in JUMBO COMICS #1 (Sept. 1938). Peter Pupp was another Eisner creation and, like the Hawk, it also appeared in FEATURE FUNNIES. The next Eisner creation to appear was Sheena, Queen of the Jungle, who made her debut in WAGS Vol. 2 #37 (July 1938) ... once again, before her appearance in JUMBO COMICS.[6]

The name of the first artist to draw Sheena is unknown but, somewhere between the 8th and 12th page, the art chores were taken over by Mort Meskin. Once again, I disagree with the previous article -- mainly because the position as stated by Bob Powell could lead the reader to draw the wrong conclusion. On reading Powell's statement you could be forgiven if you assumed that Meskin was the first artist on Sheena and that he only drew one week of the strip. As already stated, he was not the first artist. At a <u>minimum</u>, Meskin drew 20 pages; at a <u>maximum</u>, he did 24 pages. Even if Meskin was a prolific worker, practicing his craft in a period when standards were not as demanding as they were to become, later, I find it hard to imagine that he would have turned out that many pages in one week. When Meskin left the strip, after the 32nd page, there followed 8 pages of very mixed art. Mixed, in the sense that many older Meskin panels were re-used and a new artist contributed various panels, trying to adopt Meskin's style. This new artist may have been Powell, but certainly there was no doubt that Powell's very individualistic style became evident with page 42 -- and he continued to handle Sheena for a number of years. It was Powell who was responsible for introducing Sheena's leopard-skin costume (JUMBO #10) -- prior to this, she wore a low-cut, single piece mini-dress.

Another Eisner character that appeared in WAGS was Yarko the Great,[7] who appeared in December, 1939. This was some six months after his initial appearance in WONDER #2. Like the Hawk, Yarko contained the breakdown, angles and art style that exhibited the unmistakable Eisner touch.

Other EPS material that appeared in WAGS included The Clock Strikes by George E. Brenner, Gallant Knight by Vernon Henkel, Jim Swift by Ed Cronin, Tex Maxon by Cecelia Munson, Scrappy by Charles Mintz, and "Rusty" Robinson and the Amazons by Arturo Cazemueve . . . and an adaptation of Alexandre Dumas' The Count of Monte Cristo. This latter feature is most interesting by virtue of the artists who worked on it. The early pages were handled by "Jack Curtiss" who is better known these days as Jack Kirby. The strip was then taken over by "Jack Cortez", who was none other than that master draftsman, the late Lou Fine.[8]

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[4]Commencing with WAGS Vol. 4 #10, the price was increased to threepence.

[5]If the Joshua B. Powers dates are correct, Hawks of the Seas first appeared in January, 1937.

[6]<u>The Great Comic Book Heroes</u> erroneously credits Sheena with being the star of JUMBO COMICS.

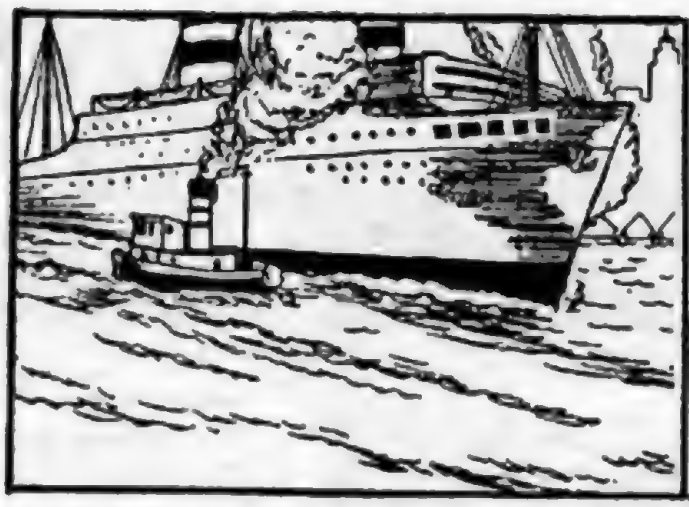
[7]In <u>The Great Comic Book Heroes</u>, Feiffer mistakenly refers to Yarko the Great as "Yarko the Magician".

[8]In <u>History of Comics</u> Vol. 1, Jim Steranko mistakenly credits the "Jack Cortez" work to Jack Kirby. Also, the inference is made that much of the early work appearing under the names of "Curt Davis" and "Fred Sande" was done by Kirby. Kirby, undoubtedly, handled the <u>earliest</u> pages but from JUMBO #4 through #10 the work was again by Lou Fine. By sheer volume of pages, Fine has more claim to those names than Kirby.

A sample page from The Spirit

HE'S COMIN'..
HE'S COMIN'..
HE'S COMIN'..
IN HERE, SLIPPERY..
HE'S LOCKED UP GHUSLY, WARDEN!
..NOW THERE'S NOTHING TO DO BUT WAIT FOR THE BIG BREAK...
WAIT, WAIT, WAIT, WAIT! THAT'S ALL I EVER DO IN THIS ZOO! ... A BIG CONCRETE JUNGLE.... BAH!

YARKO THE GREAT



OUR SCENE OPENS IN THE BUSY NEW YORK HARBOR, CROSSROADS OF THE WORLD.... MID CLOUDS OF SMOKE FROM A MYRIAD OF CHUGGING TUGS THE SUPER LINER TANORA GLIDES HOME...

MRS LAWTON HEADS FOR A WAITING LIMOUSINE..

THE WOMAN STOOPS OVER AND REMOVES HER SHOE.....

FROM A HOLLOW HEEL SHE REMOVES A SMALL FORTUNE IN JEWELS...

ROCCO, THIS IS THE LAST TIME-- I'M AFRAID MY HUSBAND SUSPECTS I'VE BEEN SMUGGLING JEWELRY
DON'T WORRY, I'LL TAKE CARE OF EVERY-THING!

IN THE LAWTON HOME, YARKO IS CHATTING WITH HIS OLD FRIEND, JUDGE LAWTON.....

Initially, a number of these features appeared under the banner of Universal Phoenix Features Syndicate but, eventually, were controlled by EPS. As many of the features appeared in the comics of those publishing companies with which Eisner was associated (i.e. Fox, Fiction House and Quality), it may well be that Eisner had a major interest in Universal Phoenix and brought his features with him when he changed over to EPS. This is one point that, probably, only Will Eisner could answer.

It think it is, also, reasonable to suggest that WAGS may have played an important part in two other facets of Eisner's remarkable career. I would suggest that the success of the tabloid-format of WAGS (allied with the possible reduction in production costs, due to the availability of printing plates/matrixes already made for WAGS) was the inspiration for Eisner to print those first 8 issues of JUMBO COMICS in Tabloid format -- usually described as "an outsize, black and white comic".[9] Also, I would suggest that when Eisner was negotiating to sell The Spirit to the Register and Tribune Syndicate, his performance in supplying so many regular features, each week, for WAGS must have weighed very heavily in his favor.

WAGS was published by Joshua B. Powers, Inc. and, for the first 2 and 1/2 years it was printed by The Greater Buffalo Press, Inc., Buffalo, New York. From that point onwards it was printed by Eastern Color Printing Co., Waterbury, Connecticut.

There has been a tendency for comics fandom, generally, to speak of The Spirit as if it was the perfect strip; as if every episode was superb in art and storyline; as if any copy of The Spirit should be purchased and treasured. I do not subscribe to such a fallacy -- and I think the Miller-Fisher article was the first step in enlightening many fans who held such notions.

That The Spirit, at its best, was a magnificent example of the potential of the graphic story is accepted by all serious students/critics of the medium. That The Spirit, at its worst, was trite in storyline, dull and unimaginative in layout and, even, poorly drawn is a simple fact of life. It is, indeed, unfortunate that the strip which was responsible for pointing the medium in a new and exciting direction should be forced to accept, as part of its whole being, the many mediocre efforts. For, unless you clarify the position, when you speak of The Spirit . . . you speak of all the Spirit stories. Therefore, let me clarify my position. When I speak in terms of the greatness of The Spirit, I refer only to those tales in which it is obvious that Will Eisner was the guiding hand. And, as you would have gathered from the Miller-Fisher article, as a comic entirely produced by Eisner is something of a rarity, my references to Eisner's work are meant to indicate Eisner and his best assistants.

Many of the early Spirit stories were not very Eisnerish in appearance.[10] No doubt, this was due to the particular artist responsible for the inking. There was, also, a tendency to incorporate gimmicks that would have been more at home in the comic books of the day. Two that come to mind are The Spirit's Autoplane (which looked like a sports roadster equipped with wings, nose propellor and tail fins) and his Gliding Suit (a bat-like overcoat which allowed the Spirit to leap, safely, from both cliffs and crashing airplanes). Fortunately, these items only lasted until the first half of 1941. However, these observations should not deter you from acquiring copies of these early stories, should you have the good fortune to encounter them.

By July 1942, the strip was starting to change its appearance. It reverted to the Eisner look in August but, by September, it was obvious that the Eisner influence was missing. Consequently, the U.S. Army has a lot to answer for! While those that continued the strip attempted to retain the flavor of the unique integrated logo and splash page, for the most part, their efforts were pallid imitations. It was a case of (if you'll pardon the pun) the spirit being willing but the flesh being weak! Lou Fine's hand became very apparent in January 1943, with his fine linework, attention to detail and less-grotesque posturing and contortions of his figures. His attempts to add humor, while well-drawn, were not compatable with his particular art style. According to the previous article, most of Fine's work was inked by Alex Kotsky -- whose linework was of the Fine mold.

From the middle of 1943 until December 1945, The Spirit lost its charm and impact. The artwork and layouts were like dozens of other strips which were appearing in comic books and the stories seemed to rotate around fairly simple themes. Basically, they were detective-cum-whodunnit stories with an occasional humorous (and I use the word in the loosest possible sense!) tale, woven around Ebony or Dolan. There was nothing distinctive about these efforts . . . there was none of the Eisner magic. Many of the sections from this period looked as if they may well have been handled by the Quality line's house artists. In fact, there was more than a sneaking resemblance to Midnight, (Quality's imitation of the Spirit) which was handled by such artists as Jack Cole, Paul Gustavson, Gil Fox and John Belfi.

On December 23, 1945 the splash-page suddenly departed from the bland stereotypes of the previous 2 and 1/2 years and, once again, took on an Eisner-like appearance. Appropriately, it was 'The Christmas Spirit' -- and it guaranteed good cheer for all the readers. From that point onwards, the splash pages regained their old life, vitality and punch -- and retained this appeal almost to the end of its run.

At the same time as the splash pages improved so did the interior art and the storyline. The overall change was so dramatic; so much like the Spirit of old; one could only conclude that Eisner was, once again, involved in guiding the destiny of his brainchild.

It is interesting to note that, during Eisner's absence from the strip, the scriptwriters chose to ignore the possibilities of making use of many of the interesting supporting characters created by Eisner. Unless Eisner had placed some form of restriction on them (which is unlikely), this seemed a strange path to take -- particularly as they could not come up with any worthwhile characters of their own.

As if to make up for lost time, on December 30, 1945, Eisner confronted the Spirit with three villains . . . The Squid, Mr. Hush, and Mr. Fly. Then, on January 13, 1946, the section was devoted to giving a recap of the origin of the Spirit. It was as if Eisner was re-stating his intentions and saying to the readers, "Forget that stuff you've been reading in recent years . . . this is the real character I created . . . this is what you'll be getting, now that I'm back at the helm!"

The following week, Satin ('Sylvia Satin . . . alias Silk Satin . . . alias Black Satin . . . alias etc.) made a welcome reappearance. And in the months that followed the readers were re-introduced to old friends and presented with a host of new friends. Over the years, Eisner's capacity for producing fascinating characters to assist the Spirit's storyline is remarkable. Consider, if you will, some of the following:

THE GOODIES: Commissioner Eustace Dolan . . . Ellen Dolan . . . Ebony White . . . Sam Klink . . . Willum Waif . . . Dick Whittler . . . P.S. Smith . . .

Darling O'Shea.

THE BADDIES: The Black Bow . . . Captain Murdrex . . . The Squid . . . Mr. Hush . . . The Duchess of Doom . . . Mr. Carrion (and his buzzard "Julia") . . . The Octopus . . . Panther Stalk.

THE IN-BETWEENERS: Satin . . . King of the Hoboes . . . P'Gell . . . Powder Pouf . . . Bleaker Moore . . . Sparrow Fallon . . . Castanet . . . Thorne Strand . . . Autum Mews . . . Sand Seraf.

THE OTHERS: Orcha Chornya . . . Murmansk Manny . . . Blubber . . . Nylon Rose . . . Zoltan P. Yafodder . . . Dulcet Tone . . . Olga Bustle . . . Hazel McBeth . . . Sylvie Vault . . . Silken Floss . . . Hoagy the Yogi . . . Mr. Bowser . . . Oren Grey . . . Wild Rice . . . Plaster of Paris . . . Cosmek . . . Wisp O'Smoke . . . Lilly Lotus . . . Monica Veto . . . Ice Waters . . . Cider Sue . . . Walkalong Haggerty

. . . and so the list runs on. As you can see, Eisner loved to play with words and had a distinct weakness for ladies with a wayward trait.

The period covered by the start of 1946 up to the early part of 1950 represents the vintage years of The Spirit (no pun intended!). Although a variation in quality must be expected, The Spirit appeared in over 200 tales with imaginative storylines, wonderful breakdowns and some fine art during this period. Had The Spirit originated in Europe, there is no doubt in my mind that the sections from this period would be available, today, in volumes with hard covers and printed on good quality paper . . . in much the same manner as Asterix, Lieutenant Blueberry, Michel Vaillant, Tintin, Lucky Luke and a host of other European strips that are available. If such volumes of The Spirit were available, they would be obligatory reading for anyone with ideas of making a career in the graphic story field. If they could absorb, apply and improve upon the contents of such volumes . . . they'd make a fortune.

Satin, the first of the women with a wayward trait to appear regularly in The Spirit, made her debut on March 16, 1941. She was a female soldier-of-fortune who considered herself equal to any man and better than most . . . long before the days of Women's Lib! For the most part, she was in-

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[9] While some of the pages of the outsize issues of JUMBO comics were printed on white paper, a large percentage was printed on orange, pink, and blue-green paper.

[10] Both Jules Feiffer (The Great Comic Book Heroes) and Les Daniels (COMIX: A History of Comic Books in America) credit The Spirit with commencing publication in 1939. As stated in the previous article,, the correct date is June 2, 1940.

Outer Space
MISSION...THE
MOON
BY
Will Eisner
This is a thing of people- that's what they forget when they talk about space ships and moon "missions". The rockets will get you there, and the scientists can keep you alive once you're up there, but still the success of it lies with people - and the DANGER lies with people -

The above Spirit Section splash, from August 3, 1952, gives definite proof that Wally Wood did, indeed, contribute to the Spirit. Notice especially the moon craters and space helmet . . . typically Wood.

volved in schemes which put her and the Spirit on the opposite sides of the fence, otherwise their love-hate relationship might have developed into something more permanent. And that was the Spirit's loss, for Satin was all woman to look at . . . and possessed a sensitivity and understanding of life that was never evident in Ellen Dolan. Ellen was the honey-blonde, typical girl-next-door in appearance. Sweet and gentle, butter wouldn't melt in her mouth . . . until she saw the Spirit (in the line of duty) with some other female. Without waiting for an explanation or ignoring those that were offered, she would become a jealous, raging, arm-waving bitch who was likely to clout the Spirit with anything ;she could lay her hands on! Or she would rush from the scene, tears flooding from those lovely doe-like eyes (an Eisner trademark, if ever there was one) and, sobbingly, tells the readers that everything was finished between her and the Spirit! I doubt if any hero of fiction has ever had a ladylove who had so little faith in her lover, as the Spirit.

Except for an imaginary tale, Ellen was never able to get the Spirit to walk down the aisle. The lovely P'Gell didn't have any success either . . . but, then, it wasn't so important to her. P'Gell's hobby was collecting. She collected husbands. Preferably rich husbands. I lost track after nine. In the process of collecting these husbands, the paths of P'Gell (and her daughter Saree) and the Spirit often crossed. And as Jules Feiffer has pointed out, when it came to trying to contain or cope with the women he encountered, the Spirit often finished with egg on his face.

The other major female in the Spirit's life was Sand Seraf, who had known Denny Colt in his pre-Spirit days. Sand made her first appearance in a two-part story that appeared on January 8 and 15, 1950 -- the second part of which was reprinted in Harvey Kurtzman's HELP! Vol. 2 #1. Sand returned to the strip on March 12, 1950 to join the Spirit, Archie Flye and Mr. Carrion in a four-part story relating to 'The Jewel of Gizeh'. It was a fine sequence marred only by the fact that it was spread over five weeks, with the 4th week being occupied by a tale with no connection with the main theme. Perhaps this story (which did not have the real Eisner look about it) was the result of deadline pressure? Let's face it, despite his magnificent record of reliability, even Eisner must have faced deadline problems and periods when, despite the perspiration, the inspiration wouldn't come.

Throughout the Spirit's career, there are a number of examples where Eisner re-used an old story and where, with a little revamping, previous stories were reprinted. For example, on February 9, 1941, there was a tale which featured Dolan, Finnegan and O'Rourke masquerading as the Spirit. This same story was used on June 27, 1948 . . . but featuring Dolan, Ebony and Klink. The story of Flaxen Weaver, on December 11, 1949 was a rewrite of the story which introduced Satin, back in 1941. In February and March, 1951 there were a series of stories taken from 4 - 5 years earlier. There are others . . . but these examples should be sufficient to make the point.

On the score of reprinted art, one only has to look at the wonderful sequence of August 24, 1947 -- when the Spirit "catches up" with the Octopus. And outstanding story in an outstanding series, this tale was reprinted on February 4, 1951. Eisner collectors should be grateful for this reprint as it gives them two chances of obtaining this excellent story. By using an 'Almanac of the Year' on December 26, 1948, Eisner was able to use a selection of miniatures of pages from the preceeding months and give a recap of the year's events.

In Sense of Wonder #11, Miller-Fisher state that the last "new" Spirit art was that which appeared in Witzend #6. This is incorrect. The Spirit page reproduced in that magazine originally appeared on January 26, 1947 -- and the same page was reprinted in the Sunday Section of January 1, 1950. Therefore, the most recent Spirit art was the story that appeared in the New York Herald Tribune on January 9, 1966. ((That error was on the part of the editor, not authors Miller and Fisher. --Bill))

From the end of May 1950, the standard of art on the Spirit began to slip and continued its downward trend until it reached the "Outer Space" series of stories. From time to time, a story appeared with the Eisner touch about it -- such as on January 14, 1951. This section was made to resemble a copy of LIFE magazine, complete with yellow subscription sticker bearing Eisner's name. On August 5, 1951 there was a dramatic change in the art style . . . and a change for the worse. According to the previous article, during this period the art was handled by Jerry Grandinetti and Jim Dixon; and then passed on to the Charles William Harvey Studio. If this information is correct (and I have no reason to believe otherwise), I am at a loss to understand how someone like Grandinetti, resp onsible for drawing and inking much of the Spirit in its hey-day, could be a party to such mediocre efforts. Perhaps it was the old story -- no Eisner at the helm? As for the work from the Charles William Harvey Studio, the efforts were so incredibly bad it is difficult to believe that Harvey Kurtzman and Bill Elder were involved. If they read this, they should hang their collective heads in shame!

Apart from Eisner's acknowledgement on the first section, there is no doubt about Wally Wood's involvement with The Spirit, when the title was altered to 'Outer Space'. In fact, I would go as far as to suggest that the three sections I have seen (July 27 thru August 10, 1952) contained pure Wood art. I don't suggest that Eisner wasn't the guiding force behind this series but the credit for the excellent art should go to Wally Wood. So, whether the final section appeared on August 10 or September 28, it went out on a high note . . . in all departments.

No discussion of the Spirit should fail to mention the splash pages. They were unique. With a weekly strip to produce, no one would have blamed Eisner if he had adopted a standard logo which could have been used year-in, year-out. With an ever-constant deadline threatening, think of the time it would have saved! Instead, Eisner opted for a different logo for every story. Maybe there were a few that looked similar in concept, but, for the most part, they were all different. They had to be different because Eisner liked to integrate the logo into the mood of the particular story. These mood-setting titles set the pace for what was to follow and, in doing so, they are entitled to much of the credit for The Spirit's success. Obviously, Eisner realized that with comics, as with other mediums, the best way to capture an audience is to grab their attention from the very beginning. The graphic story field has yet to produce another artist who can match Eisner's grabbing record. If ever he comes along, I want to be around.

These titles took on the forms of Goal Posts, Neon Signs, Stretched Rubber, Newspaper Headlines, Smoke, Postage Stamps, Film Posters, Jail Bars, TV sets, Dossier Files, Income Tax Forms, Window, Panes, Carvings in Wood and Stone, Reflections . . . ad infinitum. But Eisner's favorite forms of displaying his titles were bricks and timber in the shape of buildings and houses; and torn paper wafting in the breeze or struggling in the gutter water as it is dragged towards the drain. Eisner often used free-standing letters which cast ominous shadows, to great effect. Words cannot effectively demonstrate the broad range, substance and impact of the Eisner splash pages. They have to be seen, they have to be experienced to be appreciated.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

THE SPIRIT

ACTION Mystery ADVENTURE

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 1949

BY WILL EISNER

THE SPIRIT

LURID LOVE

SEPT.

Lurid LOVE

SICKENING STORIES ABOUT OTHER PEOPLES' MISERY & HEARTACHE

Written for people in love — about people in love — by people in Love

A LUSCOMICS

READ!!

AM I TOO STUPID TO BE LOVED??

CAN THIS BE MY FATE ?? AM I LIKE THESE FLOWERS, GATHERED IN THE SUNSHINE AND CAST ASIDE TO WILT AND WITHER WHEN THE BLOOM IS GONE ??

HAVE YOU A LOVE PROBLEM THAT YOU ARE UNABLE TO SOLVE ?

OUR OWN WANDA LUST WILL ANSWER YOUR QUESTION —

Only a purist, with a complete collection of the Spirit, would set himself the task of calculating the number of times the Spirit was shot, clubbed, punched or kicked. I don't qualify on either score -- but I do know that if the Blood Bank could have bottled all the blood that flowed through the pages of The Spirit, they wouldn't need donors for many a long year! It flowed thick and it flowed often -- but, under Eisner, you never got the impression that it was "gore for gore's sake".

But, in case I have given the impression that The Spirit contained nothing but blood and violence, let me assure you that this was only a portion of the canvas. It contained a great many observations about the world of that period; it contained tongue-in-cheek humor that, at times, bordered on slapstick; it contained adaptations of well-known literary works and it contained satire.

During 1947-48, Eisner and his crew had the time of their lives spoofing anything that took their fancy . . . including cartoonists. On July 20, 1947 The Spirit had a dig at the reigning champions of the newspaper strips. There was Al Capp ("Al Slapp -- Li'l Adam"), Harold Gray ("Elmer Hay - Little Homeless Brenda") and Chester Gould ("Hector Ghoul - Nick Stacy") . . . and each artist was drawn in the style of his strip. Orson Welles, Gorgeous George and the Roller Derby were all given the once-over, at one time or another. On April 27, 1947 The Spirit contained the complete words and music to "Every Little Bug (Has a Honey to Bug But Me)" -- a ditty that often flowed from Ebony's lips. Two months later, Robert Merrill made a guest appearance in the strip and sang this song. He was not impressed. On April 25, 1948 the Spirit accepted a sponsor -- "Goople's Cream", complete with spot ads, and singing commercial. Under the heading of "Fairy Tales for Juvenile Delinquents", Eisner presented updated versions of "Hansel and Gretal" and "Cinderalla". In keeping with his early interests, Eisner also featured adaptations of "The Thing" by Ambrose Bierce and "The Fall of the House of Usher" by Edgar Allan Poe. No, my friends, there was a lot more to The Spirit than mayhem and mystery . . . a hell of a lot more!

One other section I would like to single-out for special mention was the one that appeared on September 18, 1949. This was entitled "Lurid Love" (Sickening Stories About Other People's Misery & Heartaches) -- which gave the love-confession type of magazines their just desserts. One of the many 'advertisements' in this issue offers the readers a chance to be a cartoonist. The blurb states, "Many famous cartoonists started this way -- Will Eisner, Jules Feiffer, Abe Kanegson . . . " Now, what I want to know is . . . who is Abe Kanegson and where does he fit into The Spirit Saga? ((See John Benson's letter. -- Bill))

With reference to the "Will Eisner Productions' imprint, the earliest section I can locate that bears this is June 24, 1951.

One of the pleasing aspects of "Will Eisner: A Man and His Work," in SofW #11, was the recognition in part of S.R. Powell's contribution to the field of the graphic story. Bob Powell was in comic books from the very early days and, possibly due to his early association with Eisner, fully understood the medium. He was a prolific producer for the industry and handled virtually every type of comic story. He, also, produced a number of newspaper strips. His work was distinctive and always of a high standard . . . but I have, yet, to read any sort of detailed coverage of this man's career.

The influence of The Spirit's integrated logo is obvious in the early stages of the back-up feature, Mr. Mystic. However, due to the pressure of deadlines or the lack of inspiration, Powell soon adopted a fairly straightforward logo and continued to use it until he left the strip. Mr. Mystic, which was an extension of Eisner's Yarko the Great, was an excellent strip under Powell's control. In fact, during those years of Eisner's Army service, it was the best feature in the section -- and deserved to have the lead-off space occupied by the Spirit.

Powell, first, shared the strip's byline with W. Morgan Thomas[11] on March 16, 1941 and progressed to a solo byline on April 13, 1941. This was around the same period that Klaus Nordling began to sign the Lady Luck strip -- so it is not unlikely that Powell was inspired by Nordling's initiative, in this area, and followed suit. Because Mr. Mystic was produced entirely by Powell, it was only fair that he should be given due credit.

When Klaus Nordling took over Lady Luck, the appearance changed from one of realistic adventure to one that could only be described as cartoony-slapstick. Because my tastes, in the main, tend to favor the more realistic style of art, it is difficult for me to be objective about Nordling's ability. I first encountered his work in 1939 in WONDERWORLD and MYSTERY MEN COMICS and, in retrospect, it must be admitted that his work was better than the majority of the material that appeared in the Fox line of comics. It is, perhaps, the fact that he replaced artists like Lou Fine and Nick Viscardi that didn't sit too well with me -- rather than the quality of his work. Like Powell, Nordling was greatly influenced by Eisner's integrated logo. Unlike Powell, he did not throw in the sponge, but continued to produce titles for Lady Luck which were in keeping with the mood of the story. And in the middle '40's, when he was producing The Barker, Pen Miller and other strips for the Quality line, he continued to use non-standard titles . . . a continuing proof of the Eisner influence. Nordling's strength was one that he shared with the majoirity of the better artists of the Golden Age -- he knew how to handle panel-to-panel continuity dramatically.

* * * * * *

The foregoing started out as a letter of comment . . . but I decided to expand it for two reasons. First and foremost, to call to your attention the fact that, in almost a decade in fandom, I have never read a detailed article on Will Eisner's career. This man, quite rightly, has been hailed as the greatest innovator the comics field has seen; a living legend; a giant in the field of the graphic s story. Yet, apart from John Benson's excellent interview in Witzend #6 and the Miller-Fisher effort in the last issue of Sense of Wonder, what substantial examination has fandom produced on Eisner and those associated with him? This article is, certainly, not the answer to that question -- though I hope it has answered a few questions, even if I have broken a few records for conclusion-jumping. It seems to me that U.S. fan writers should tackle this project before any more time slips past. As each month passes, memories fade a little more and valuable records are thrown away or destroyed. After all, if I can dig out information from the other side of the globe, think how much more you can do on your own home ground!

Next, fandom has witnessed the passing of such greats as Lou Fine, Bob Powell, Jack Cole, Mac Raboy, Frank Thomas and Joe Maneely . . . all of whom made major contributions to the graphic story world -- yet, how much do we really know about them? With persistency, inspired detective work and a lot of luck, we may learn a little more about them than has already appeared in print. But, in endeavoring to accord these men the honor due to them, we must not overlook those old-timers who are still with us. It's fine that we should be getting details about Neal Adams and Frank Frazetta at the present time but, with all due respect to those fine artists, I'll go bonkers if I read another "in-depth" article or interview with these men. Particularly when I know that there are artists like Reed Crandall, Paul Gustavson, George Tuska, Bill Everett, Nick Cardy, Fred Guardineer and a host of others are waiting in the wings, armed with a wealth of information and anecdotes which would enrich the written history of the comics.

"Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old Father Time is a-flying ....."

John Ryan - June 1972

JOHN RYAN recently celebrated his forty-first birthday July 8th, after spending nearly a fourth of his life involved in Comics Fandom. He is Sales Manager for Firestone General Productions Division, and lives in Yeronga, Queensland with wife Jan (who kindly provided the photo) and their two children (Fiona, 5, and Sean, 4).

John has the distinction of publishing the first Aussie comicsine, Down Under, in November of 1964, about the same time Jerry Bails was getting comics apa CAPA-Alpha off the ground. John became a member, and still contributes an issue of his excellent apa-zine, Boomerang, whenever he can find the time. His Alley-winning Bidgee columns have appeared in The Comic Reader, GoshWow! and Star-Studded Comics.

As you may have gathered from the Stanley Pitt article, John has become firm friends with most Australian pro comic artists, over the years. His chief interest in collecting is for U.S. comics prior to mid-1942 and Australian comics from all periods. He has a good working knowledge of older U.S. comics and artists, which compliments perfectly his increasing interest in indexing and documenting details about those comics and artists.

Currently, much of his fan activity centers around Richard Kyle's Graphic Story World, where he is a Contributing Editor and Australian sales agent.

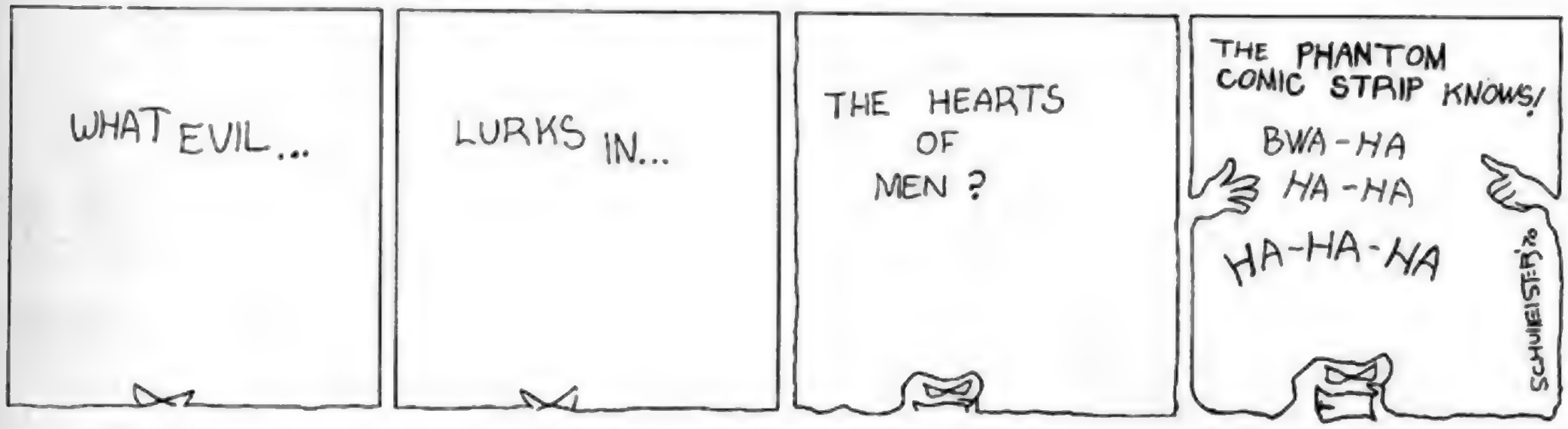
John Ryan is also one of the funniest, friendliest, most generous fellows I've ever had the pleasure to meet and work with. Fandom truly wouldn't be the same without him.

--- Bill Schelly

11."W. Morgan Thomas" was an Editors Press Service 'house name' used to cover one of the many Eisner creations. Both Feiffer and Daniels infer that this name was a pseudonym for Bob Powell, when a little research would have told them that other artists worked under this name before Powell and in later years (when Fiction House adopted it as a house name) many other artists' work appeared under that name.

FROM FAN KIM WESTON: Section #426, July 25, 1948 ("The Thing" by Ambrose Bierce) and #430, August 22, 1948 ("The Fall of the House of Usher" by Edgar Allan Poe) were adaptations by Jerry Grandenetti -- samples when he was trying to land a job with Eisner. Kim also reports that the last Spirit Section he has seen was John Benson's section of October 5, 1952.

THE PHANTOM COMIC STRIP



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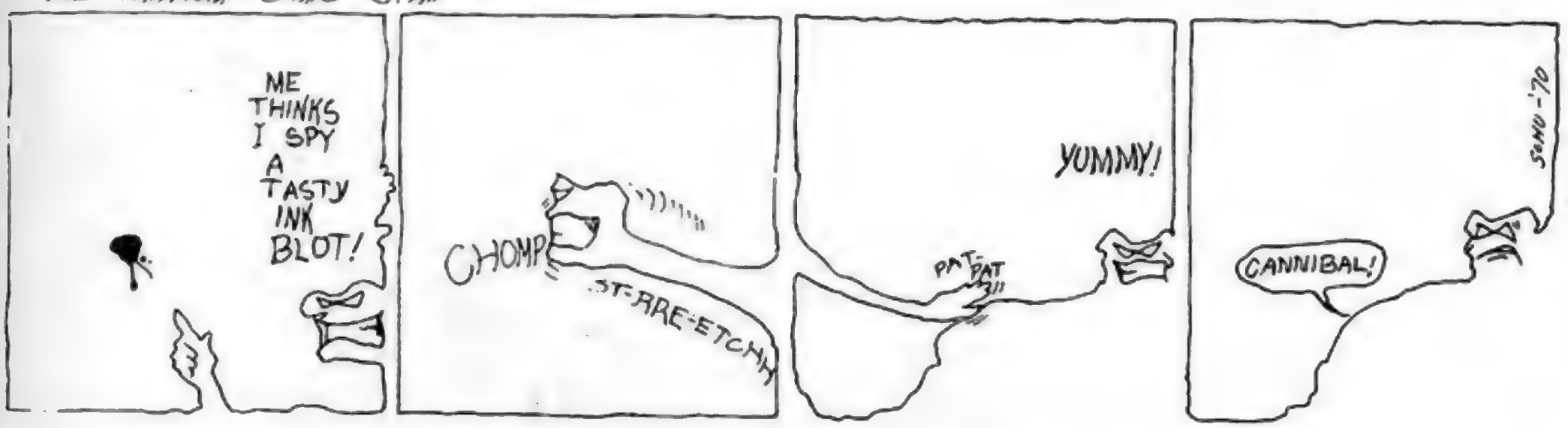

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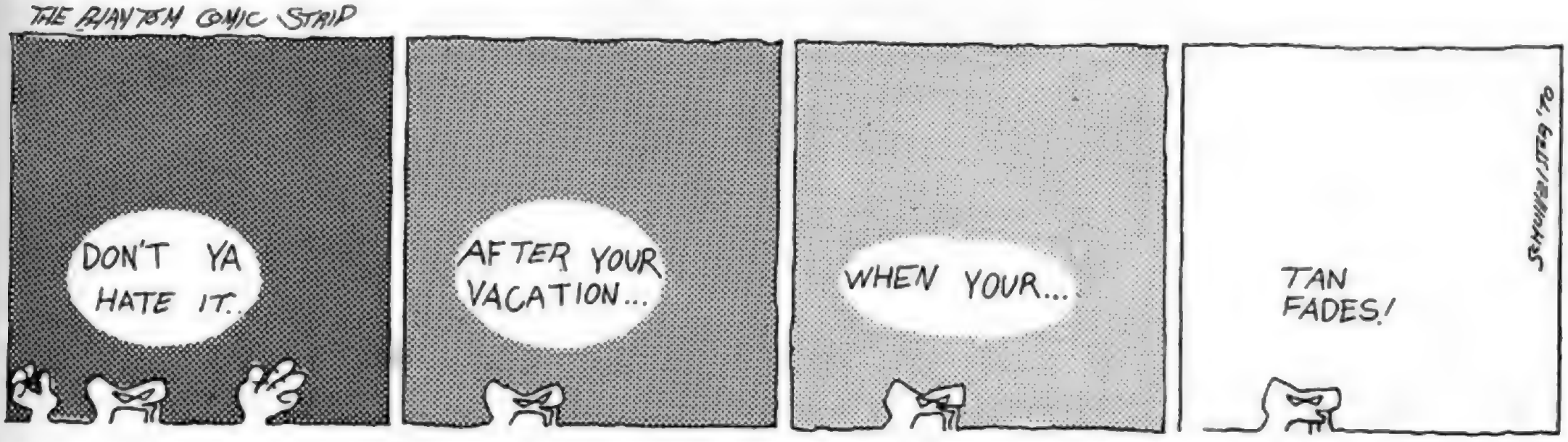

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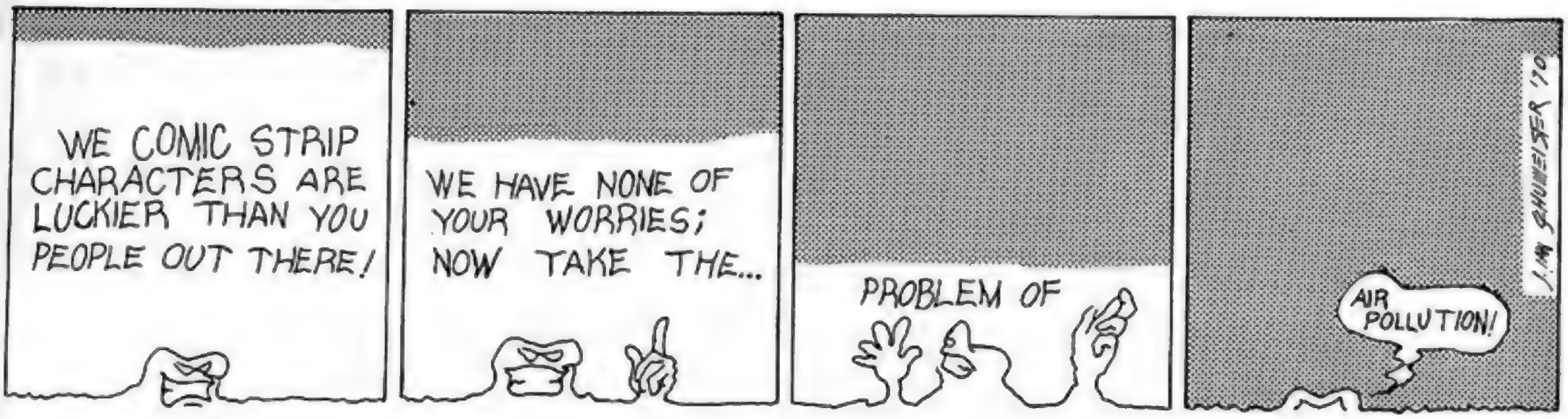
WE COMIC STRIP CHARACTERS ARE LUCKIER THAN YOU PEOPLE OUT THERE!
WE HAVE NONE OF YOUR WORRIES; NOW TAKE THE...
PROBLEM OF
AIR POLLUTION!
SCHNEIDER '70

WANTED

FOR

CONTEMPT OF COMICS

DR. FREDRIC WERTHAM

RUSS MANNING

MODEL T TO T-BIRD

On a shelf in my studio is an eight inch stack of Dell comic books ... FOUR COLOR COMICS #75, 93, 100 (Gene Autry) and #269 (Johnny Mack Brown), GENE AUTRY #1 through #37, and JOHNNY MACK BROWN #1 through #9. There are gaps in the stack . . . I haven't located several numbers yet, and the rest of the missing issues do not contain that particular distinction that makes these stack contain the work of one certain illustrator.

The artwork of others is also present, but this particular artist is the featured illustrator, handling the lead story in most of the issues. He illustrated every page of the Autry #75, and almost all of the JOHNNY MACK BROWN #2, but it is possible that even the sharpest eye in comic book fandom might not credit the same artist with having done both magazines. Therein lies comic book history and the profile of a pro.

Missing (still) from the stack is Dell FOUR COLOR COMICS #66 (1945 Gene Autry), the very first comic book assignment this artist ever received. He was working at the Walt Disney Studios at the time as a story man, and was recruited by Carl Buettner, an art editor at Whitman Publishing Company (and also the creator, author/artist of the fondly remembered Bucky Bug in Walt Disney Comics). The newly recruited illustrator was soon working on Dell titles other than the Autry and Brown westerns, but his development from earliest attempts to mature style is most clearly shown in these two.

Like tracing the evolution of the T-Bird out of the Model-T, it is possible to follow this artist through this eight inch stack of comics as he learned and mastered the art of comic book illustration.

His earliest steps, then . . . the Four Color Autrys: Each page has four lines of panels, usually with two panels per line, rather than the three line, six panel page common today. An adventure illustrator is at a disadvantage in this format . . . eight panels per page can all too easily seem overcrowded and the panels too small. But one of this artist's greatest distinctions -- simplicity -- keeps his eight panel pages from seeming crowded. There is none of the terrible overcrowding of detail prevalent on too many comic book pages.

Aside from a fine avoidance of unnecessary detail, the artwork is rather rough and crude, and the characters are not too appealing; but the style is reminiscent of no one else. The handling of black areas and wrinkles is somewhat in the Sickles/Caniff tradition, but there is no copying at all from these two masters. The storytelling is straightforward and clear, without any attempt at unusual angles, attention-getting close-ups or any pyro-techniques whatever.

Here, then, in his very first comic books, this artist showed the major traits that have been his ever since: absolute originality of drawing style, smooth consistent storytelling, and an all-too-rare simplicity.

How did this artist's work compare to others on the stands at that time? He couldn't have cared less! He studied Caniff in the Sunday pages and in several Popular reprints, he has said, but never studied any of the other comic book artists' work. He soon stopped looking at even those he himself had illustrated.

This was a very independent and original artist. He consciously chose the direction he wished his art to go . . . and he went. He has occasionally shifted emphasis within his basic directions, but the main course is as clear as tracks in fresh snow.

Evidently the Four Color one-shots sold satisfactorily -- a regular series began, with GENE AUTRY #1 (May-June 1946), and our artist's work is smoother, his characters are more firm, and the foreshortening is more convincing. Here for the first time, too, there are glimmers of yet another trait, one in which this artist fairly shines . . . design. In what is perhaps an oversimplification, comic book/strip artwork can be divided into two basic divisions: composed, and designed. It would take too long to define the difference between the two, but basically, Hal Foster's panels are superbly composed, while Chester Gould's show fine (though perhaps unconscious) design. Our artist has a very fine sense of design, and AUTRY #1 begins to show it. The second story in this magazine was done by someone else and it is obvious that our artist was called in to do corrections.

The artwork in AUTRY #3 falls apart. Too tight a deadline, perhaps.

#5 is back on the main line of steady improvement, as are #6 through #10. The opening panels in #6 and #8 are very fine, beautifully designed; that in #8 is pure essence of the "western".

The opening panel in #11 is a knockout, a superb design and for once, very effective color . . . and the magazine has gone to the three line, six panel page format. The larger panels seemed to have agreed with the artist. His panels become downright dramatic, the towns become three-dimensional, and the characters, including a lovely girl, are very fine. The artist now has to create and render two less panels per page, and he evidently used the gift of time to further improve his art. The likenesses of Autry are more heroic (an almost hopeless task), and the story itself is almost interesting.

How well the comic book script is written greatly influences most illustrators. At its simplest, scene following scene following scene of two people just talking gives the artist little chance of keeping the reader's interest. Conversely, when the script has lively action and sparkling dialogue, a good illustrator feels like doing his very best. The editor, of course, would have the opposite . . . the poorest script needs the best artwork, while a fine script can carry poor art!

Who wrote the Autrys? It isn't possible to check Whitman's files, but the artist has said that Eleanor Packer wrote many of the scripts he illustrated . . . and that lady is still writing some of the dullest, least imaginative, most talkative scripts conceivable, as long after as 1962. I believe I detect the style of Dick Calkins, Senior (yep, the Dick Calkins of Buck Rogers) in the better stories; chiefly in the later Autrys and best Johnny Mack Browns. Calkins definitely wrote many Red Ryder scripts in the early 1950's, and I strongly suspect his hand in the most interesting Autrys and Browns. Elizabeth Beecher was also scripting westerns and movie adaptations in the early 1950's, and she, too, may have done some of the more imaginative stories.

With #11, the Autry magazine became a monthly, and the time gap between Autry assignments had virtually disappeared. The artist's drawing becomes steadily smoother, his handling of western scenery and characters is becoming exceptional. No other western comic book of that period approaches the best of these early Autrys for excellence in depicting the American Southwest. Red Ryder might, but Harmon's work is comic strip, with the additional time and money for careful creation.

Then, a bombshell! The difference between the drawing in #15 and #16 is startling! If this artist had continued to use the drawing style he suddenly springs in #16, he might today be the most copied originator in the field.

His use of design, heretofore subordinated to realism, suddenly breaks through, and every figure, every shape, is designed. The artist uses much less black shading to show form, but indicates depth by the careful juxtaposition of shapes. Clear-cut, finely designed shapes fit within and against each other in a quite unique illusion of reality, and the overall impression is very pleasing. A young girl is handled particularly well.

Again, the artist has done the original. I don't remember anything like this style in any other comic book or strip. It may have come partially from a study of the 19th Century French painter-draftsman, Ingres[1], whom our artist had long admired, but it most likely reflects his own particular beliefs and way of seeing. The element of design is strong in all of his work, and here in #16 it is set winging free.

Incredibly enough, in the back pages of #16, this fine style is beginning to weaken, and by #17 has disappeared. Why? I suspect that arch-nemesis of all comic book illustrators: time. This particular style would require far more careful layout and rendering, and it is probably that deadlines necessitated a less demanding way of working. Deadlines . . . and an opportunity too good to pass up.

As the most consistent and reliable adventure illustrator Whitman had been able to find, he now had the opportunity to make more money than he ever had before, and he made the most of it. He appreciated fine books and expensive sportscars, and the only way to achieve them at the page rate Whitman was paying was by long hours at the drawing board, and incredible drawing speed. Almost anyone can chain themselves to the board, but entirely without assistance, this artist was soon pencilling, lettering, and inking an average of two complete adventure comic books per month!

Yet look at these Autry pages. Rushed, they are at times, but it is not the design and storytelling that suffer. Page after page, story after story, even where most evidently pinched by deadlines, his work is strong, the drawing is firm . . . and the magazines sold.

#17 through #21 appear to have been pencilled somewhat similarly to #16. Once achieved, the basic style would not be easy to forget, and for some artists, pencilling, rather than inking, comes closer to their fundamental way of seeing, thinking. The inking style of #17 - #21 is too heavy and swiftly done to match the unique images of #16.

#22 through #26 have other artists on the lead story, with our artist doing the short stories in the back of the book (except #26, wherein he does not appear at all). I do not know the name of the artist of #22, but in #23 is Nicholas Firfires -- a fine art painter of western scenes who went back to his easel in Santa Barbara when Gene Autry ceased being published.

In #27 our artist returns for a one night stand, and a great one. For the first time, the story itself is interesting from a viewpoint other than the classic ranch-town-sheriff-hero bit . . . with a wild old man who lives with a bear, Indians, and an exciting storyline. Our artist is unrushed and consistent. #16 was an unexpected tour de force that weakened . . . #27 comes off perfectly.

From #28 to #37 it is sometimes Firfires, sometimes our artist, on the lead story. Of this group perhaps only #34 approaches the quality of #27, with some unusual characters and use of textures. It also features a petite blonde who bears a close resemblance to Sybil, a young lady the artist knew at the time.

#37 is the last GENE AUTRY the artist was featured in. He did the second stories in #39 (wonderful artwork of a New Orleans setting) and #40; but by the time he was no longer drawing Autry, he was illustrating JOHNNY MACK BROWN.

In my opinion, JOHNNY MACK BROWN #2 is the best western illustration this artist has done. It may be the best artwork he has done in any comic book. It may even be the most truly "western" comic book anyone has done!

It benefits from a fine script, in the classic western mold . . . a tenderfoot who turns on Johnny after Johnny Mack makes a man of him . . . hidden wealth on a ranch . . . a pretty gal . . . everything's there. The illustration is bed-rock simple. The characters are real working westerners, unglorified, and the panels breathe sun and dust and saddlesweat in as fine a visual representation of the half true/half legend southwest as it has ever received. Perhaps others have shown us a more universally accepted image of the cowboy hero, but it is interesting to imagine what this artist might have done had he not had to use these carry-over heroes from the silliest, most untrue uses the movies ever made of the cowboy legend.

With JOHNNY MACK BROWN #9 this artist left the westerns to concentrate on other comic books for Dell, and comic strips for Walt Disney. Over the years, his western illustrating has appeared very intermittently in Buck Jones, Rex Allen, Annie Oakley, Jesse James and Range Rider, and none of them exhibit the drawing and strong feeling for the theme as does JOHNNY MACK BROWN #2.

His work changed quite drastically in the mid-1950's; a change that would seem to be largely responsible for the present day rejection of his work by so many comic book fans. That it may be only that special breed of cat -- the fan -- who is rejecting his work might be inferred from the fact that the comic book that carries his work today is one of the best selling on the stands, and that his work was in the incredibly successful DAVY CROCKETT (good for eight million copies sold in its very short life).

How can this artist who is so criticized by Fandom, this paragon of speed who once illustrated nine complete pages in one very long working day, this man who never looks at a comic book, especially ones he himself has done . . . how can this artist, despite these seeming handicaps, produce best-selling comic books?

Perhaps it isn't the whole answer, but the simple fact may be that he is a fine natural artist who can tell a story originally. Especially here in the later issues of this eight inch stack of comic books, the beautifully designed, strong, simple panels tell a story as well as any have ever been told in the comic book form. While we can't always identify ourselves completely with his heroes, they are not copies of any other that ever existed. His style is unique, and at this date in comic book/strip art, how rare that is!

Where does this artist rank in the pantheon of comic book greats? My own opinion is that we have yet to see the heights to which his earlier, better work will be prized. The passage of time tends to confer the favor of approval on the strong, the simple, and the truly original. We still stand too close, perhaps, but I strongly suspect that time will certainly favor this artist's work and reputation; though the artist, it would seem, could hardly care less!

* * * *

For those fans who haven't already guessed, and for those who do not have a like stack of comics wherein to trace his art to the recognizable mature style, and for those collectors whose alter-egos are searchers after comic book esoterica . . . a very disolute-looking character is inscribing this artist's name on a tombstone in panel 1, page 9, of JOHNNY MACK BROWN #3 (Jan-Mar 1951).

R. M.

[1] Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780 - 1867) was a French Neo-Classic painter.

THE PHANTOM COMIC STRIP
PENNY ARCADE
KNOWS-ALL
ASK A?
KNO ALL
ASK
HEH HEH HEH
O.K. YA WISE-ASS MACHINE—IF YA KNOW SO MUCH, WHAT'S THE ULTIMATE TRUTH?
THE ULTIMATE TRUTH IS YOU CAN BE REPLACED BY A ROUND-HEADED BOY AND HIS BEAGLE! (click)
SCHULTZ '75

Originally, I planned to editorialize in this space -- in the traditional sense, rather than the somewhat new-fangled fannish sense of just talking about the fanzine, etc. At this point, though, after weeks of typing and pasting and transfering rub-off lettering (and no, Harvey, justified margins just aren't worth the trouble), well ... I'm too exhausted to discuss proposed topics like "art-zines vs. article-zines". Besides, that sort of editorizing just isn't one of my talents. I have a list of things to cover sitting on the desk before me, and by George, I'm going to go right down it, point by point.

My advertizing a four-color cover in RB-CC was, obviously, overly ambitious and premature. While I'm happy to report that Sense of Wonder is beginning (I repeat, beginning) to hold its own financially, it may be a while before I can manage that kind of lavish production. Four-color covers are especially good if you plan on hawking your fanzine at comicons or on newsstands ... and I would never deny that they are Very Nice; personally, I would prefer a 40 page fanzine in black and white rather than a 25 page zine with color covers, if a choice had to be made. After all, Sense of Wonder isn't an "art-zine" of the Infinity/Inanity ilk. If I had to describe the strongest point of SofW it would be the articles and lay-outs. There are plenty of customers around to support all kinds of fanzines. (I could point out, somewhat cynically, that a fanzine like Phase just couldn't hack it ... despite the Joneses and Wrightsons.) I stubbornly hold by the theory that "quality will out". In other words, if you've got something good, it will find its market. And if you don't ... why, then you either become a martyr (as I did with earlier issues of SofW), function with a small circulation, discontinue, or alter your product so that it supplies a real demand.

Didn't I say somewhere back there that I wouldn't discuss the art-zine / article-zine question? Ah well ... ye editor can't resist shooting his mouth off occasionally. And, as I believe Roy Thomas once said, you pretty much have to tolerate such idioscincracies, because the editor is also the publi$her.

I am constantly amazed at the help I've received from so many fans/friends. For example, Allan (E.R.B. Digest) Tompkins provided numerous photocopies for John Ryan's articles and insisted on footing the bill himself. Ray Miller, Joe Brancatelli, Tony Isabella, and Jan Strnad all lent me artwork from their collections. When his first finished cover was ruined in a Phoenix flood that inundated his home, Don Newton found time to do not one, but two full-pagers. And Dick Kyle came through with Vince Davis' beautiful photo study of Jack Kirby. Heroes all!

But, without slighting the aforementioned

gentlemen one bit, I must single out John Ryan, without whom half these pages would be a rather stark white. John -- remember how you couldn't manage anything new for me because you were so busy? -- Famous Last Words, if I ever heard them. Seems like ancient history now, after you wrote one and a half new articles and supplied twice as many photocopies as I could possibly use.

This issue contains two reprints. The main body of the Yarmak article, as stated, ran in the long-defunct E.R.B. Digest, and "Model T to T-Bird" saw print in Capt. Bijo White's Batmania #1 ... way back in July, 1964 (my first fanzine). Due to their excellence, their age, and their rarity, I decided to dust them off -- do some updating -- and, with the best wishes of editors Tompkins and White, here they are. (Bob Cosgrove's fine Kirby piece and Jim Schumeister's equally fine cartoons were given trial runs in comics apa, CAPA-Alpha.)

Way back in issue #10, in an editorial entitled "Transition", I talked about how my concept of Sense of Wonder was changing, and how I envisioned the fanzine as improving until it became a well-balanced, informative magazine of the graphic arts. I talked in somewhat lofty tones about what I felt the goals of the fanzine should be. Now, several months and two issues later, I see a substantially different fanzine before me -- one that, I think, has taken a couple giant steps toward becoming the sort of journal I wanted, and I felt Fandom wanted. What I want to know is, do you approve? Does the direction SofW has taken please you? How would you alter it if you were editor?

Let me know, either by writing a letter or re-ordering and including a brief note. Feedback is essential if I am to know how SofW looks to you; in many ways, I'm too close to it to look at it objectively.

So write (published letters merit a free ish) ... and re-order. #13 will cost 75¢, and subscriptions are $1.50 for #13 and 14, or $3.00 for #13 through 16. With your support Sense of Wonder can continue improving, and can be published more often.

#13 will be out as soon as possible, and that will depend largely on the amount of time it takes to amass the funds.

I guess that's all for now. Take care, have fun ... enjoy yourself.

Peace,

Bill Schelly

Bill Schelly

Eclipse